In the Name of Allah,
the All-beneficent, the All-merciful

قال الله تعالى:

﴿إِنَّمَا يُرِيد اللَّه لِيُذْهِب عَنْكُم الرِّجْس أَهْل الْبَيْت وَيُطَهِّرَكُم تَطْهِيرًا﴾

"Indeed Allah desires to repel all impurity from you, O People of the Household, and purify you with a thorough purification."

(*Sūrah al-Aḥzāb* 33:33)

Prophetic traditions recorded in both Sunnī and Shīʿah most reliable books of traditions [*aḥādīth*] and exegesis of the Qur'ān [*tafsīr*] have confirmed that this part of the holy verse is exclusively referring to the People of the Mantle [*ahl al-kisāʾ*] who were the *Ahl al-Bayt* (ʿa) during the time of revelation of the verse. For instance, refer to the following references:

Sunnī: (1) Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal (d. 241 AH), *Al-Musnad*, 1:231; 4:107; 6:292, 304 (2) Muslim (d. 261 AH), *Al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, 7:130 (3) Al-Tirmidhī (d. 279 AH), *Sunan*, 5:361, etc. (4) Al-Dūlābī (d. 310 AH), *Al-Dhurriyyah al-Ṭāhirah al-Nabawiyyah*, p. 108 (5) Al-Nasā'ī (d. 303 AH), *Al-Sunan al-Kubrā,* 5:108, 113 (6) Al-Ḥakīm al-Nayshābūrī (d. 405 AH), *Al-Mustadrak al-Ṣaḥīḥayn*, 2:416, 3:133, 146-147 (7) Al-Zarkashī (d. 794 AH), *Al-Burḥān*, p. 197 (8) Ibn Hājar al-Asqalānī (d. 852 AH), *Fatḥ al-Barī Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, 7:104.

Shīʿah: (1) Al-Kulaynī (d. 328 AH), *Uṣūl al-Kāfī*, 1:287 (2) Ibn Bābawayh (d. 329 AH), *Al-Imāmah wa'l-Tabṣīrah*, p. 47, *ḥadīth* 29 (3) Al-Maghribī (d. 363 AH), *Daʿāʾim al-Islām*, pp. 35, 37 (4) Al-Ṣadūq (d. 381 AH), *Al-Khiṣāl*, pp. 403, 550 (5) Al-Ṭūsī (d. 460 AH), *Al-Amālī*, *aḥādīth* 438, 482, 783.

For further information, refer to the exegesis of the holy verse recorded in the following references: (1) Al-Jaṣṣāṣ (d. 370 AH), *Aḥkām al-Qur'ān* (2) Al-Wāḥidī (d. 468 AH), *Asbāb al-Nuzūl* (3) Ibn al-Jawzī (d. 597 AH), *Zād al-Masīr* (4) Al-Qurṭubī (d. 671 AH), *Al-Jāmiʿ Li-Aḥkām al-Qur'ān* (5) Ibn Kathīr (d. 774 AH), *Tafsīr* (6) Al-Thaʿlabī, *Tafsīr* (7) Al-Ṭabarī (d. 875 AH), *Tafsīr* (8) Al-Suyūṭī (d. 911 AH), *Al-Durr al-Manthūr* (9) Al-Shawkānī (d. 1250 AH), *Fatḥ al-Qadīr* (10) Al-ʿAyyāshī (d. 320 AH), *Tafsīr* (11) Al-Qummī (d. 329 AH), *Tafsīr* (12) Furāt al-Kūfī (d. 352 AH), *Tafsīr*, at the margin of the exegesis of Qur'ān 4:59 (13) Al-Ṭabarsī (d. 560 AH), *Majmaʿ al-Bayān*, as well as many other reference books on *ḥadīth* and *tafsīr*.

REVELATION IN DIVINE RELIGIONS

قَال رَسُول الله 3 :

إِنِّي تَارِكٌ فِيكُمُ الثَّقَلَيْنِ: كِتَابَ اللهِ وَعِتْرَتِي أَهْلَ بَيْتِي، مَا إِنْ تَمَسَّكْتُمْ بِهِمَا لَنْ تَضِلُّوا بَعْدِي أَبَداً، وَإِنَّهُمَا لَنْ يَفْتَرِقَا حَتَّى يَرِدَا عَلَيَّ الْحَوْضَ.

The Messenger of Allah (ṣ) said:
"Verily, I am leaving among you two precious things [*Thaqalayn*]: The Book of Allah and my progeny [*'Itrah*], the members of my Household [*Ahl al-Bayt*]. If you hold fast to them, you shall never go astray. These two will never separate from each other until they meet me at the Pond [*ḥawḍ*] (of *Kawthar*)."

Some references:

Al-Ḥākim an-Nayshābūrī, *Al-Mustadrak `alā al-Ṣaḥīḥayn* (Beirut), vol. 3, pp. 109-110, 148, 533
Muslim, *Al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, (English translation), book 31, *ḥadīths* 5920-3
At-Tirmidhī, *Al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, vol. 5, pp. 621-2, *ḥadīths* 3786, 3788; vol. 2, p. 219
An-Nassā'ī, *Khaṣā'iṣ 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib*, *ḥadīth* 79
Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, *Al-Musnad*, vol. 3, pp. 14, 17, 26; vol. 3, pp. 26, 59; vol. 4, p. 371; vol. 5, pp. 181-182, 189-190
Ibn al-Athīr, *Jāmi` al-Uṣūl*, vol. 1, p. 277
Ibn Kathīr, *Al-Bidāyah wa'n-Nihāyah*, vol. 5, p. 209
Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-`Aẓīm*, vol. 6, p. 199
Nāṣir ad-Dīn al-Albanī, *Silsilat al-Aḥādīth aṣ-ṣaḥīḥah* (Kuwait: Ad-Dar as-Salafiyyah), vol. 4, pp. 355-358.

REVELATION IN DIVINE RELIGIONS

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Cultural Affairs Department Ahl al-Bayt (‘a) World Assembly

نام کتاب: وحی در ادیان آسمانی

نویسنده: آیة الله ابراهیم امینی

تهیه کننده: اداره ترجمه مجمع جهانی اهل بیت(ع)

مترجم: سیّد ایرج رزاقی

زبان ترجمه: انگلیسی

Revelation in Divine Religions

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Proofreader: *Badr Shahin*
Layout*: Fatemeh Golzar*
Publisher: *ABWA Publishing and Printing Center*
First Printing: 2020
Printed by: Mojab
Copies: 50
ISBN: 978-964-529-864-5
The Ahl al-Bayt (‘a) World Assembly (ABWA)
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PREFACE

The invaluable legacy of the Household [*Ahl al-Bayt*] of the Prophet (may peace be upon them all), as preserved by their followers, is a comprehensive school of thought that embraces all branches of Islamic knowledge. This school has produced many brilliant scholars who have drawn inspiration from this rich and pure resource. It has provided the Muslim *ummah* with many scholars whom, following in the footsteps of Imams of the Prophet's Household (ʻa), have done their best to clear up the doubts raised by various creeds and currents within and without Muslim society and to answer their questions. Throughout the past centuries, they have given well-reasoned answers and clarifications concerning these questions and doubts.

To meet the responsibilities assigned to it, the Ahl al-Bayt World Assembly (ABWA) has embarked on a defense of the sanctity of the Islamic message and its verities, often obscured by the partisans of various sects and creeds as well as by currents hostile to Islam. The Assembly follows in the footsteps of the Ahl al-Bayt (ʻa) and the disciples of their school of thought in its readiness to confront these challenges and tries to be on the frontline in consonance with the demands of every age.

The arguments contained in the works of the scholars

belonging to the School of the Ahl al-Bayt (‘a) are of unique significance. That is because they are based on genuine scholarship and appeal to reason, and avoid prejudice and bias. These arguments address scholars and thinkers in a manner that appeals to healthy minds and wholesome human nature.

To assist the seekers of truth, the Ahl al-Bayt World Assembly has endeavored to present a new phase of these arguments contained in the studies and translations of the works of contemporary Shi‘ah writers and those who have embraced this sublime school of thought through divine blessing.

The Assembly is also engaged in editing and publishing valuable works by leading Shi‘ah scholars of earlier ages to assist the seekers of the truth in discovering the truths which the School of the Prophet’s Household (‘a) has offered to the entire world.

The Ahl al-Bayt World Assembly looks forward to benefit from the opinions of the readers and their suggestions and constructive criticism in this area.

We also invite scholars, translators and other institutions to assist us in propagating the genuine Islamic teachings as preached by the Prophet Muhammad (s)

We beseech God, the Most High, to accept our humble efforts and to enable us to enhance them under the auspices of Imam al-Mahdi, His vicegerent on the earth (may Allah expedite his advent).

We express our gratitude to the author and the translator of this book. We also thank our colleagues who have

participated in producing this work, especially the staff of the Translation Office. ?

Cultural Affairs Department

The Ahl al-Bayt (‘a) World Assembly

PROLOGUE

Fundamental to Prophecy, *nubuwwah*, and indispensable to divine religions is Revelation, a mysterious and exclusive link between God, the Most Exalted, and selectmen, the Prophets. God, the most Exalted, talks to the Prophet, directly or through the angel of Revelation, suggesting to his illuminated heart His sciences, knowledge, injunctions and rules, and assigns him the mission of conveying the same to people. Without seeking help from his senses or without resorting to his mental power and drawing an analogy, the Prophet, likewise, receives the realities from the invisible world through this heavenly connection. He is, at the same time, fully conscious of the source of this invisible message; that is, God the Glorified, and of his heavy responsibility – delivering the message – and enjoys internal tranquility.

Revelation, being beyond the horizon of man's cognition, is a phenomenon whose essence we cannot know; it is not a usual occurrence that can be known through scientific instruments. Its reality cannot be conceived and explained; we cannot test or repeat it. But the Prophet can inwardly perceive and experience what the Revelation in reality is.

Words cannot explain the Prophet's inner experience and his direct vision, nor can these be conveyed to others, but

the rich content of the revelation and of God's message can be transferred to others. The Prophet (s) reports the state of the Revelation, but not this metaphysical phenomenon itself. Those who accompanied him witnessed the signs of the Revelation, but were unable to grasp its reality.

Therefore, we clearly assert that we are not able to know and explain the reality of Revelation, nor can we provide an all-inclusive explanation for this metaphysical phenomenon. Readers should not expect it either. We merely desire to expound the points that might help in an understanding of the Revelation bringing this mysterious connection closer to the mind. In our discussion, words of the Islamic sages and Gnostics will be quoted to contribute to the same purpose, since a study of these will sketch this mysterious link.

The inability to know the reality of Revelation is never a reason for anyone to doubt and deny the essence of the Revelation, the Prophecy and the sending of God's message. Prophethood is an Islamic issue that has been investigated and discussed in philosophical and theological books and has been proved through definite demonstrative proofs. It does not come to a standstill when the question of knowledge of the reality of the revelation is raised.

Besides, the sending of prophets is an undeniable historic fact. Throughout history, distinguished men have risen to guide people, claiming that they are in contact with God, the Glorified, and that they have programs and messages to ensure man's happiness in this world and in the next. History bears witness that Prophets have been the chosen men who have had no weak points in life and have been

known for their trustworthiness, honesty, truthfulness, sincerity and benevolence to people. Besides, to prove their prophecy, they worked miracles and on behalf of God introduced definite and wise plans to the people. Strong in their belief and determined in their words, they ascribed these to God, the Almighty, and called people to believe and obey. Because they were acknowledged as truthful, trustworthy and dependable, people used to come to believe in them, accept their call, struggle and make sacrifices for the fulfillment of their aims.

The rising up of the Prophets and their guiding movements are historic realities that have left deep effects on humankind. The world would now be witnessing a different condition if these had not actualized. The sincere effort of those who claimed to have been missioned with the duty of Prophethood should not be called deceptive.

Prophet Muhammad (s), one of the personages shining in the history of prophets, the final one closest to us, has a clear and fully-recorded life-history. History bears witness that long before he was appointed the Prophet, he was known for his honesty, truthfulness, love of justice, chastity, and benevolence. He was perfect in stature and mind, and conducted his life customarily. He was unlettered. No ill conduct or deviations in his mentality have ever been recorded.

He lived like this until the fortieth year of his life when his status suddenly underwent a change. He firmly said, "I see Gabriel and hear his voice. He comes to me from God bringing messages, and I am commissioned to transmit God's message to people." His state would, from time to time, change. Upon returning to the normal state, he would

pronounce in beautiful words the wise injunctions, laws, commands and lofty knowledge and teachings; he said that he had received them from God, the Exalted, in exactly the same words and phrases, and that he was charged to recite them to people.

These verses of the divine book - the Qur'an, which is your religious book – are among his miracles. No one can bring the like of it. Bring a verse like it if you are in doubt. He thus challenged the people through Qur'anic verses revealed to him:

﴿¾ÛÎ¥Ë `Ëρ‘qÝÎ{qêû $R‰õã 4?ã $Zø¥R $±Ë5=ƒ' Î NÇZà2 bÎr﴾

And if you are in doubt as to that which We have revealed to Our servant, then produce a chapter like it. (2:23)

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﴿ ûüÏ»èø¢É§ `Ë ïŠÚ =ƒ' ŵ É»GÅø¢@ŠÃ ÿ?r ïƒ‰ƒ ûÏ/

And this Quran is not such as could be forged by those besides Allah, but it is a verification of that which is before it and a clear explanation of the book, there is no doubt in it, from the Lord of the worlds. (10:37)

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﴿ ûüÏï‰» ¹ Lêäbϋ‹ $Ërß

Or do they say: He has forged it? Say: Then bring a chapter like this and invite whom you can besides Allah, if you are truthful. (10:38)

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Say: If men and jinn should combine together to bring the like of this Quran, they could not bring the like of it, though some of them were aiders of others. (17:88)

It is in such a decisive manner that the Qur'an introduces itself as the miracle, challenges those who refute it, and finally asserts that they are unable to bring the like of it. As the Qur'an predicted, those who opposed it were unable to do so, nor will anyone be able to in the future.

Prophet Muhammad (s) used to tell people that the Qur'an was not his speech, and that he could not bring a verse out of his desire or change one verse with another; in the words of the Qur'an:

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ÚÅ¥ÿR Ç$)ï `Ï ¼ä/é+á ÞÍ Üc qãƒ $B Ê/è ä/ ÷á ‹»d Îöî Æ#äöÀ

Ðöƒ >#‹ã 'Îí Æ¸Á ãÞ) Æ$¾{á þÕ †‹)é r qã$B ¥v) ß?á Þ)

Ð‹ãã

And when Our clear communications are recited to them, those who hope not for Our meeting say: Bring a Qur'an other than this or change it. Say: It does not beseem me that I should change it of myself; I follow naught but what is revealed to me, surely I fear, if I disobey my Lord, the punishment of a mighty day. (10:15)

Nà6 ŠÎ ÅM\Ï9 ß)ù ¾ÄÎ NÃ1‘Š& wr Nà6 øæ ¼qêÖ? $B ª! $ä$© ÖÉ©@è

š c qæÉè? Ÿx ù& ¾ÄÎß ` Ð #Ã3ã

Say: If Allah had desired (otherwise) I would not have recited to you, nor would He have taught it to you, indeed I have lived a lifetime among you before it; do you not then understand? (10:16)

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bqÃBs÷ãÇö)Ï p¼q‘r “ ‰èr Nà6 Îß ` Ð é$Á / #‹»d ’Îß ` Ð

And when you bring them not a revelation they say: Why do you not put one together? Say, I only follow what is revealed to me from my Lord; these are clear proofs from your Lord and a guidance and a mercy for a people who believe. (7:203)

Elsewhere he introduces the Qur'an as the words brought by Gabriel – the word of God. He then forcefully says if anyone fabricates lies against God, he will be certainly reproved:

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ö9r ÇÎÈ ûüÏ»è¢ÉÊ§ ` Ð @ƒÍ\? ÇÍÈ brã©‹? $B W<Î% 9Ü. Æö)Î Ÿr

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Most surely, it is the Word brought by an honored Apostle. And it is not the word of a poet; little is it that you believe.

Nor the word of a soothsayer; little is it that you mind. It is a revelation from the Lord of the world. And if he had fabricated against Us some of the sayings, We would certainly have seized him by the right hand. And We would certainly have cut off his aorta. (69:40-6)

The Qur'an is a unique book sent down to Prophet Muhammad (s) piece by piece, during twenty-three years. This book contains sciences that are far beyond man's horizon of thought, and gives detailed news concerning the resurrection and life after death. It contains rules and laws for every aspect of human life, explains the lives of the past prophets and those of their people, communicates news on invisible matters, invites people to follow moralities and ethical virtues, and warns them against committing evils. It contains programs for political, social and myriads of other issues too.

The rich and exalted concepts of the Qur'an have been expressed in a fluent, clear, elegant, sweet and novel language. The Qur'anic verses have meter and rhyme of the type particular to the Qur'an itself, but these are neither poetry nor prose in the conventional sense, but have their own sweetness and beauty. It was because of these lofty notions and elegant language, that men of letters of the time were filled with wonder and had to pull down the literary pieces they had attached to the walls of the Ka'bah as a sign of honor, confessing their inability to bring the like of the Qur'anic verses.

It is noteworthy that these elegant and exquisite verses were uttered by a person who had had no schooling and was unable to write. His words were unprecedented considering the customs of the time and place.

His usual words and addresses had no such particularities, and were much like those of other people. It can thus be said that the Qur'an is not the word of Muhammad (s), but is the word of God, the most Exalted, revealed to his illuminated heart in the form of words, to be conveyed to people. The Qu'ran is the eternal miracle of the Prophet (s), and is the best proof of his prophecy. A study of the contents of the Qur'an leads us to acknowledge that it is revealed. For further studies, readers may see interpretations of the Qur'an, books on theology and articles of faith.

Ibrahim Amini,
Qum, 1998

LITERAL MEANING OF REVELATION

Revelation has been variously defined, summed up as "Communicating the matter to the mind of the addressee, immediately and hidden, in a manner concealed from others."

A. Defining the revelation, Raghib writes: "*Wahy* (revelation) means a quick hint. Because it implies quickness, it has been used in the Arabic phrase: *Amron Wahy*. At times, Revelation comes in a coded speech, at others in a voice, uncombined, sometimes by signs made by certain body organs, and at others through writing"[1]

B. Ibn Athir writes, "The word *Wahy* has been repeated in a*hadith*, traditions, and it has been used in cases pertaining to writing, signs, prophetic missions, inspiration, and mysterious language."[2]

Other philologists have mentioned the same meanings, which need not be repeated here. It can thus be understood that the term revelation is used in six senses: 1) coded and mysterious speech; 2) a voice without the form of words; 3) allusion; 4) writing; 5) prophetic mission and dispatch;

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1. *Al-Mufradat fi Gharib al-Qur'an*, the entry Wahy.
2. *Al-Nihayah*, vol, 5, p. 143

6) inspiration. The two concepts: quickness of communication and mysteriousness are implied in all these applications.

C. Shaykh Mufid says, "The term revelation primarily means a hidden discourse. Next, it is used for anything meant to be secretly communicated to the addressee, in a manner unknown to others."[1]

D. Allamah Tabataba'i – may God be satisfied with him– says: "Revelation means a quick hint."[2]

The author of *Ruh al-Bayan* Commentary of the Qur'an writes, "The term revelation essentially means a quick hint. It is so called because revelation comes quickly. Revelation is the essence of understanding, making something understood, and the essence of what is understood."[3]

Taken literally, the term "Wahy" (revelation and/or inspiration) is unconditional as regards the one who reveals a message; this being might be God, an angel, a human being, *jinn* or Shaitan. It is not specified either who the recipient of the revelation might be. This will be referred to in our future discussions.

1. *Tashih al-'Aqa'id*, p, 120.
2. *Tafsir Al-Mizan*, vol. 8, p. 76.
3. *Ruh ul-Bayan*, vol. 8, p. 344.

REVELATION AS IS USED IN THE QUR'AN

The term *wahy* and its derivatives, all inclusive of the basic sense "making something understood quickly and secretly" have been used in the Qur'an about 78 times grouped as follows:

1. Instinctive Understanding

The holy Qur'an says,

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And your Lord revealed to the bee saying: Make hives in the mountains and in the trees and in what they build. (16:68)

Explaining this verse, Shaykh Mufid says, "By *revelation* it is meant a hidden inspiration. The bee understands its duty without there being a speech and without anyone else hearing it"[1] The wondrous tasks that the bee performs: making a hexagon hive from wax and guarding it, traveling long distances in search of flowers, sucking the

1. Tashih al-‘'Itiqad, p. 121.

nectar and changing it into honey, returning home and depositing the honey in the hive, guarding the queen, making love with her, and scores of other astonishing things all come from the instinct given to it. Along with amazingly beautiful tasks, the honey bee receives, through its natural disposition, inspiration from the Lord of the World.

2. Natural Laws and Practices ruling the World

The Qur'an says,

ﻓﺜﻢ ﺍﺳﺘﻮﻯ ﺇﻟﻰ ﺍﻟﺴﻤﺎﺀ ﻭﻫﻲ ﺩﺧﺎﻥ ﻓﻘﺎﻝ ﻟﻬﺎ ﻭﻟﻸﺭﺽ ﺍﺋﺘﻴﺎ ﻃﻮﻋﺎ ﺃﻭ ﻛﺮﻫﺎ ﻗﺎﻟﺘﺎ ﺃﺗﻴﻨﺎ ﻃﺎﺋﻌﻴﻦ

ﻓﻘﻀﺎﻫﻦ ﺳﺒﻊ ﺳﻤﺎﻭﺍﺕ ﻓﻲ ﻳﻮﻣﻴﻦ ﻭﺃﻭﺣﻰ ﻓﻲ ﻛﻞ ﺳﻤﺎﺀ ﺃﻣﺮﻫﺎ ﻭﺯﻳﻨﺎ ﺍﻟﺴﻤﺎﺀ ﺍﻟﺪﻧﻴﺎ ﺑﻤﺼﺎﺑﻴﺢ

ﻭﺣﻔﻈﺎ ﺫﻟﻚ ﺗﻘﺪﻳﺮ ﺍﻟﻌﺰﻳﺰ ﺍﻟﻌﻠﻴﻢ

Then He directed Himself to the heaven and it was a vapor, so He said to it and to the earth: Come both, willingly or unwillingly. They both said: We come willingly. So He ordained them seven heavens in two periods, and revealed in every heaven its affair; and We adorned the lower heaven with brilliant stars and made it to guard; that is the decree of the Mighty, the Knowing. (41:11-12)

ﺍﻟﻠﻪ ﺍﻟﺬﻱ ﺧﻠﻖ ﺳﺒﻊ ﺳﻤﺎﻭﺍﺕ ﻭﻣﻦ ﺍﻷﺭﺽ ﻣﺜﻠﻬﻦ ﻳﺘﻨﺰﻝ ﺍﻷﻣﺮ ﺑﻴﻨﻬﻦ

ﻟﺘﻌﻠﻤﻮﺍ ﺃﻥ ﺍﻟﻠﻪ ﻋﻠﻰ ﻛﻞ ﺷﻲﺀ ﻗﺪﻳﺮ ﻭﺃﻥ ﺍﻟﻠﻪ ﻗﺪ ﺃﺣﺎﻁ ﺑﻜﻞ ﺷﻲﺀ ﻋﻠﻤﺎ

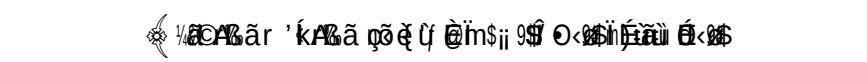
When the earth is shaken with her violent shaking, And the earth brings forth her burdens, And man says: What has befallen her? On that day she shall tell her news, because your Lord had inspired her. (99:1-5)

God, the Exalted, has created the earth, the heavens and the totality of the universe, law-abiding – ruled by the law of causality. The universe is being directed in accordance with specific laws; it acts dutifully in a law-abiding state that comes from the Creator. This might be the meaning of divine revelation – the creative guidance stated in such Qur'anic verses. Some exegetes have interpreted the term "revelation" stated in the above verse as being addressed to the inhabitants of the heavens, i.e. the angels.

Two important points are derived from the above two Qur'anic verses: the revelation was not in words; the recipient of the revelation does not need to be an intelligent being.

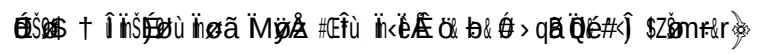
3. Inspiration Made to the Heart

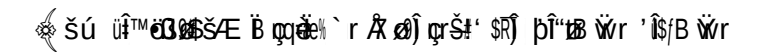
Concerning the mother of Prophet Moses (a) the holy Qur'an says:



When We revealed to your mother what was revealed; Saying: Put him into a chest, then cast it down into the river, then the river shall throw him on the shore; there shall take him up one who is an enemy to Me and enemy to him. (20:37-8)

The Qur'an also says:





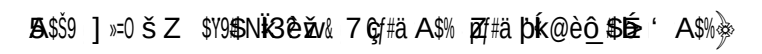
And We revealed to Musa's mother, saying: Give him suck, then when you fear for him, cast him into the river and do not fear nor grieve, surely We will bring him back to you and make him one of the apostles. (27:7)

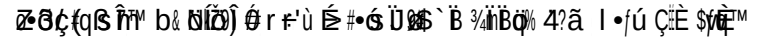
It was Moses' mother who received the Revelation, which was undoubtedly not of the type sent down to the Prophets, but of the type secretly making her understand – an inspiration made into the heart – which might come in waking or in sleep.

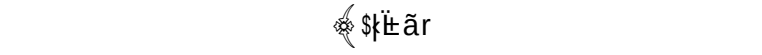
Shaykh Mufid says, "Muslims unanimously agree that the Revelation came to Moses' (ʿa) mother in the form of a dream; she might have been inspired while she was asleep.[1]

4. An Allusion

The holy Qur'an says Zakarriya (ʿa) said:



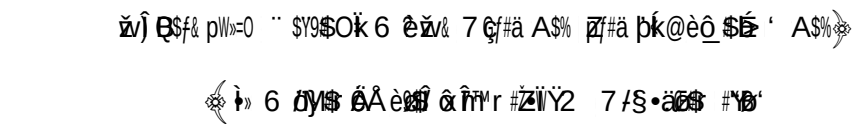




1. Tashih al-I'tiqad.

He said: My Lord! Give me a sign. He said: Your sign is that you will not be able to speak to the people three nights while in sound health. So he went forth to his people from his place of worship, then he made known to them that they should glorify Allah morning and evening. (19:10-11)

Mentioning the story of Zakariya (‘a), the holy Qur'an says,

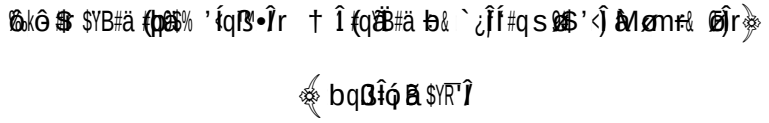


He said: My Lord! Appoint a sign for me.” Said He: “Your sign is that you shall not speak to them for three days, except through signs; and remember your Lord much and glorify Him in the evening and the morning. (3:41)

In the above verses, Prophet Zakariya (‘a) was the one who made a matter known, and it was his folk who received it. The revelation was in the form of a hint understood by the addressee only, as the phrase "*by signs*" mentioned in the above verse conveys. The content of the revelation has been the glorification of Allah in the evening and morning.

5. Revelation to the Disciples of Jesus Christ

The holy Qur'an says:

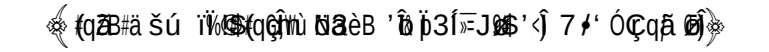


And when I revealed to the disciples, saying, Believe in Me and My apostles, they said: We believe, and bear witness that we submit ourselves. (5:111)

In this verse, God, the Exalted, communicated the Revelation, and the disciples of Jesus (‘a) received it. According to some commentators, the disciples might have been prophets. If so, the Revelation in question is an idiomatic revelation. If their prophetic mission is not proved, the Revelation should be taken here to mean an inspiration suggested to the heart, which is apparently so.

6. Revelation to Angels

The holy Qur'an says:

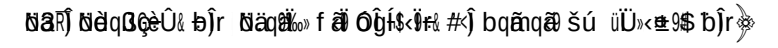


When your Lord revealed to the angels: I am with you, therefore make firm those who believe. (8:12)

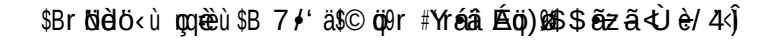
Here, God, the Exalted, has made the Revelation, and the angels are its recipients. However, it was not a Revelation assigning Prophet hood, nor was it communicated through speech because it has been proved that angels are not corporeal beings.

7. Satans' Suggestions

The holy Qur'an says:



And most surely the Shaitans suggest to their friends that they should contend with you; and if you obey them, you shall most surely be polytheists. (6:121)



And thus did We make for every prophet an enemy, the Shaitans from among men and jinn, some of them suggesting to others to varnish falsehood to deceive them, and had your Lord pleased they would not have done it, therefore leave them and that which they forge. (6:112)

In the above verses, it is Satans from among men and *jinn* who secretly make misleading suggestions to their friends. Therefore, *Wahy* here means a whispering into each other's ears; and if devils from among the jinn make the suggestion, it will be a diabolic suggestion made into the hearts of the people who have gone astray.

8. Revelation to the Prophets

Although there are some instances in the Qur'an where the term revelation has been used to refer to those other than the Prophets, it is mostly used in relation with them, some examples of which are:

$ZØm÷¤r ¾íÏ‰è/ .`B `¿ÍZ9$ 8yqÇ4<Î $ZØm÷¤ $J. 7øÎ $ZØm÷¤ $RÎ

>qƒ¤r Á¤ŠÃr Å$6Ø"F$ >qàèƒr ,»sØÎr Ø$Ê»JØÎr OŠÜ°•ÎÎ #<Î

#Yqç–Š¼Ã#Š$Y•?#är `»KøÎ3r brãdr §ÇqÃr

Surely We have revealed to you as We revealed to Noah, and the prophets after him, and We revealed to Abraham and Ishmael and Isaac and Jacob and the tribes, and Jesus and Job and Jonah and Aaron and Solomon and We gave to David the Psalms. (4:63)

b#äèø#‹»d 7øÎ $ZØm÷¤ $JÎ ÆÈ Á)ø$`¡ô¤ 7øã•È àR ßtÙ

šú üÎÿ»óø$`Ü9¾ÏÎ3‰ `B MYà2 bÎr

We narrate to you the best of narratives, by Our revealing to you this Qur'an, though before this you were certainly one of those who did not know. (12:3)

#‹»d ¥<Î ÓÇrér Ña Y•/r ÓÍÿø‰<Í- ª¹$È@è ¢‰»k- Ç9¤äÓ« ‘“ & @è

÷=/ .`Br ¾íÎ Nä‘ÉRT Ã#äèø$

Say: What thing is the weightiest in testimony? Say: Allah is witness between you and me; and this Qur'an has been revealed to me that, with it, I may warn you and whomsoever it reaches. (6:19)

In such instances, God, the Exalted, makes the communication, and it is the true divine Prophets who have been the recipients of the revelation – those who have, throughout history, been chosen to the office of Prophethood. The content of the Revelations has been

realities, teachings and messages sent from God, the Almighty, to mankind. Revelation, though lexically, shares the meaning of hidden suggestions quickly made to the addressee, it is in all such cases substantially and totally different. This will be made clear in future discussions.

REVELATION AS IS CUSTOMARILY USED

Throughout history, all true prophets have made the claim that they are in direct connection with God, the Most Exalted, receive the realities that others are unable to perceive, see the Angel of Revelation with the eye they have within them, hear voices, have been given by God the mission to propagate His messages and plans, and do their utmost in guiding His servants. This particular and mysterious connection is termed the Revelation.

The late Shaykh Mufid writes, "When the communication of revelation/inspiration is ascribed to God, in Islamic custom it exclusively pertains to the Prophets."[1] He also says, "God, the Most Exalted, sometimes inspires certain people – in their sleep – matters that later on become realities, but in Islam these are not called revelations. For instance, it is not usual to say that revelation has been made to such and such a person. It is our belief that the Infallible Imams (ʿa) have been inspired with particular knowledge, but this is not called Revelation, because

1. Tashih al-I'tiqad, p. 120.

Muslims unanimously agree that after the Prophet (s) the Revelation will not be sent to any other person."[1]

The term 'Revelation', has various definitions, most of which are not real definitions. It is impossible for the like of us to define 'Revelation' as it really is, because it is not a common experience which might be perceived and defined easily. The definitions are merely nominal.

A. In his explanation of Revelation, Allamah Tababaii – may his soul be sanctified - says, "Revelation is a particular consciousness and perception within the Prophets. No one can perceive it except those who have been divinely favored."[2] Elsewhere he says, "Revelation is something transcending ordinary matters, of the same type as the inner comprehension; it is a mysterious consciousness concealed from external senses."[3]

B. Muhammad Farid Vajdi writes, "Revelation means: Almighty God instructs the matters of religion to His Prophets through the intermediary of angels."[4]

C. Muhammad Rashid Reza writes, "Revelation has been defined as: 'Almighty God communicating religious injunctions to one of the Prophets', but I define it as: 'a kind of true knowledge (*irfan*) that one discovers in himself and is sure that it has come from the Divine, through an intermediary or without an intermediary."[5]

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1. Ibid, p. 121.
2. *Al-Mizan* Exegesis of the Qur'an, vol. 2, p. 160.
3. *Al-Mizan*, vol. 2, p. 160.
4. *Encyclopedia of al-Qarn al-Ishrin*, vol. 10, p. 707.
5. *Al-Wahy al-Muhammadi*, p. 44.

D. Zarghani writes, "In the language of religion, revelation means that God, the Exalted, pronounces to His select servants what He desires to be taught, but He does it secretly and in concealment."[1]

Similar definitions are offered in Christianity:

A. John Hick writes, "The content of revelation is a body of truths expressed in statements or propositions. Revelation is the imparting to man of divinely authenticated truths."

B. In the words of The Catholic Encyclopedia, "Revelation may be defined as the communication of some truths by God to a rational creature through means which are beyond the ordinary course of nature."[2]

C. *Dictionary of the Holy Book* says, "By Revelation, it is generally meant inspiration."[3]

As is seen above, the word, but not the reality of the Revelation, has been defined. In the following chapter, we will explain the Revelation and leave the definition to end the discussion with. We need, however, to mention that this word has been used in three different senses:

1. *Iha*; that is, communicating the revelation, an attribute of God;

2. Understanding and receiving the revelation, qualities of the recipient of the revelation,

1. *Manahil al-Irfan fi Ulum al-Qur'an*, p. 56.
2. Philosophy of Religion, p. 119.
3. *The Dictionary of the Bible*, under the word *Revelation*.

3. That which is revealed - the outcome of God's act and of the Prophet's – this being the quality of religious learning and injunctions. That is why the Holy Qur'an is considered as The Revelation.

WORD OF GOD

God Speaking is one of the earliest and most controversial discussions of the science of *kalam*, the speculative theology, which has existed among the followers of divine religions, in particular among Muslims, throughout history. Since the Revelation to the Prophet is a kind of inner experience and sensation and is actualized through a kind of dialogue between God, the most Exalted, and the Prophet, or between the Angel of Revelation and the Prophet, a better understanding of the manner of this dialogue can lead to a better understanding of the Revelation. Thus, it is necessary to begin with the above topic, "Word of God".

Discourse of God

God, the Exalted, speaks; this is a definite belief among the followers of divine religions. The Prophets claimed that God, the Glorified, spoke to them and sent messages to people. This has been accepted by their followers. Shaykh Tusi writes, "That God speaks is unanimously accepted by Muslims."[1] Qadi 'Azud al-Din writes, "The

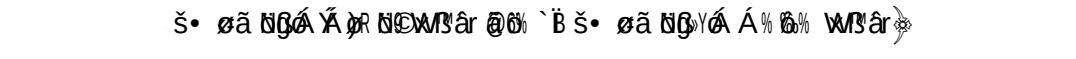
1. *Kashf al-Murad*, p. 224.

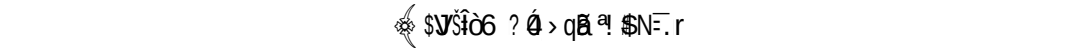
divine Prophets unanimously say that God speaks to them."[1]

Sayyid Ismail Tabarsi writes, "Muslims all, and followers of divine religions all are unanimous in in the belief of God speaking."[2]

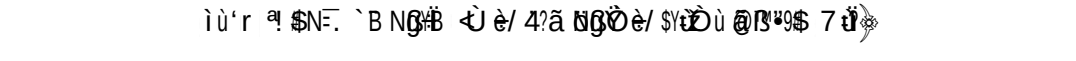
A. Sadr al-Mut'allehin, known as Mulla Sadra, writes, "The followers of all divine religions unanimously believe that God, the Glorified, speaks, because they say, God has commanded such and such a matter, and has prohibited such and such an action. Commands and prohibitions are varieties of discourse."[3]

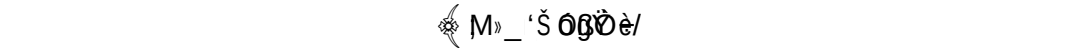
B. As exemplified in the following verses, the Holy Qur'an has attributed speech to God:





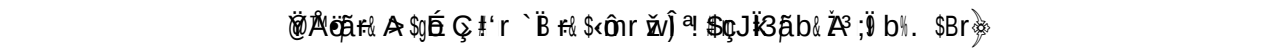
And We sent apostles We have mentioned to you before, and apostles we have not mentioned to you; and to Moses, Allah addressed His Word, speaking to him. (4:164)

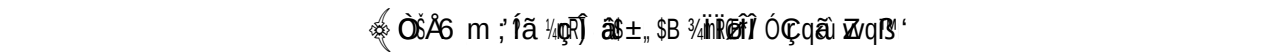




1. *Sharh al-Mawaqif*, vol. 18, p. 91.
2. *Kifayat ul-Muwwahedin*, vol. 1, On God's Attribute.
3. *Al-Mabda' wa al-Ma'ad*, p. 145.

We have made some of these apostles to excel the others; among them are they to whom Allah spoke, and some of them He exalted by many degrees of rank. (2:253)





And it is not for any mortal that Allah should speak to him except by revelation or from behind a veil, or by sending a messenger and revealing by His permission what He pleases; surely He is High, Wise. (42:51)

Besides the above verses and scores of other Traditions explicitly touching upon the issue of God's speech, the term *qawl*, "saying" and its derivatives, have in many verses been ascribed to God; so have the expressions "commanding" and "prohibition" manifested in Qur'anic utterances. Thus, the issue of God speaking to Prophets is a conclusive proof verifying the Prophets' veracity, and cannot be doubted within the milieu of divine laws.

Divisions of Speech

Speech -*kalam* or speaking- has been used with a variety of meanings, examining them can lead to a better understanding of what it really means:

Articulated Speech

The sounds and letters (*huruf*) that leave one's mouth and signify particular meanings are called *kalam*, speech/utterance. The relation between utterances and their meanings is not innate, but is decided by social contracts; that is why various peoples speak different

languages. Language speakers, employing the places of articulation and their tongues, produce specific sounds in the air around them; these are the sounds that have previously been agreed upon by people to convey meanings in certain situations. They thus give reports of their intentions and thoughts. Speech is thus categorized as being audible, *kayf-e masmu'*.

Articulated utterances are temporal, that is, they are gradually produced in the air, each being made up of sound particles and words that did not exist in this particular arrangement before. Articulated utterances are therefore created, *hadith*. Given this definition, speech is not a quality of the speaker but is something imposed on the air – caused and made by the speaker - that emanates from him – as for example "hitting" and "killing" come from someone; it is not infused in him, as are cognition (*ilm*), power, ability to read, in a person, and whiteness in an object. The speaker is a person from whom speech issues forth defined as: *sadara an-hu al-kalam* not a person in whom speech subsists *qama bihi al-kalam*.

Speech of the Soul

Speech is sometimes called speech of the soul, *kalam-i nafsi*, which means concepts, meanings, and forms that exist in the speaker's mind. This definition was given by the Ash'aris, who explained it in this way: before he begins to speak and while he is uttering something, a speaker has in his mind, concepts, meanings and forms of the utterances, and he articulates them in the same order. Mental concepts and meanings are therefore called speech of the soul.

A criticism has been made against this definition of the Ash'aris: Mental notions and assertions are elements making the knowledge of the soul. Beyond these, there is nothing to be called speech of the soul.

The Ash'ari's answer was "Words stored in the mind cannot be called knowledge because at times one may report something of which he has no knowledge, or he may possess knowledge of a contrary state of affairs. Therefore, these notions and assertions are the speech of the soul.

They also said speech of the soul is not will, *irada*, or non-will, *karah*, because at times the speaker issues a command, but he does not have the intention to have it carried out, but desires to test the person to whom the command is addressed; or there are also times when the speaker prohibits something for the performance of which he himself is not averse. Speech of the soul, therefore, is not of the same type as knowledge, *ilm*, volition, *iradeh*, and non-will, but is something that changes into a statement, command, prohibition, question, direct address, etc. after it is applied to a specific subject matter."[1]

The Ash'aris hold that the speech of the soul is the real speech; in this way they have solved the disputation concerning God's speech, *kalam*. They consider the speech of the soul to be eternal (*qadim*), counting it as one of the attributes of God, Glory be to Him, subsistent in His "Self" (*dhat*).

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1. *Sharh al-Mawaqif*, vol. 8, p. 93; *Shawariq al-Ilham*, pp. 414-555; *Al-Lum'at –ul-Ilahiyeh*, p. 441; *Kashf al-Murad*, p. 224.

The Imamiyyah and the Mu'tazilah have considered the idea of the speech of the soul to be absurd and illogical, and have refuted it, saying that "First, the term real speaking, *kalam-i haqiqi*, is customarily and philologically used to refer to the articulated sounds and letters the speaker produces in the air, not to the concepts and meaning in his mind.

Second: Concepts, meanings and words that exist in the mind of the speaker are nothing except knowledge of visualizations and affirmations. While speaking, the speaker visualizes them and talks accordingly. Such visualizations sometimes, but not always, go together with the speaker's mental assertions. Even when the speaker reports something contrary to his own opinion, he visualizes the words even if he does not give them a heart-felt assent.

In cases of command and prohibition he likewise mentally visualizes the words that signify command and prohibition although he may not be seriously determined to do what he has been commanded or may not be unwilling to what he has been prohibited from. Therefore, in the mind of the speaker there is nothing except knowledge of the notions and affirmations, to be called the speech of the soul."[1]

As regards the speech of the soul, Qushchi, too, writes, "Speech of the sound is nothing but the visualization of

1. *Sirat al-Haqq*, vol. 1, p. 298; *Al-Lum'at –ul-Ilahiyyeh*, p. 441.

the sense of the uttered words and the achievement of the same in the mind of the speaker."[1]

Ability to Speak and Produce Letters

Some scholars have considered two other factors when defining speech; one, the source of speech within the speaker, that is, the ability to speak; the other, the quality of speech and of producing words and letters.

Mulla Abdullah Zunuzi writes, "*Kalam* sometimes means letters and words per se. This is a definition most commonly used for *kalam*. At other times, in Arabic it is *takallum*, which means an individual being in a mode in which words and expressions are uttered by him. Sometimes it is *mutakallamiyyat*, that is, mere utterance of letters and words. In the first definition, speech is on the same level as acts and effects thereof. Thus, it cannot be an attribute of the speaker. In the second sense, speaking (*takallum*) is one of the true qualities and an attribute of essence (*sifat dhatiyeh*), whether the thing by which letters and words are produced is identical with the speaker's essence or is additional (*za'id*) to his essence. When taken in this sense, "speaking" refers to power (*qudrah*). The first example concerns the essentially Necessary Being, the Most Exalted, because from His essence words emanate – words that themselves have levels and degrees.

The second example concerns man, that is the relation he has with producing words and letters on the tablet within his inner self (*nafs*). These words leave his inner self when

1. *Sirat al-Haqq*, vol. 1, p. 300.

there is an urge and are physically actualized in his oral cavity, because without the faculty of speech, one cannot be a source of letters and words. As for the third definition, speech is an attribute of action (*fi'l*) and an added, *za'id*, quality, because it refers to bringing into being, *ijad*, and creation, *qaymuma*t; and it was previously asserted that real attributes of the Necessary Being are identical with His essence, and His added qualities are added *dha'id* to His essence".[1]

As can be seen, in addition to the conventional definition, this scholar has mentioned two others: the source of the speech within the speaker, and the quality of the speech, none of which is found in philology books. Although speaking issues forth from a source within the speaker, it comes in fact from power not from the speech itself. There is no doubt that the speaker (*mutekallem*) is endowed with the quality of speaking, *takallum*, not with speech itself. Therefore, *kalam*, if ever used in the above two senses, should be considered figuratively.

Applying the Term "Speech" in Cases Other Than Verbal Utterances

Some scholars have extended the sense of the term speech to include anything which might report the individuals' inner intentions. These things might be: words (*alfaz*) and sounds, or indications that are made by body members and limbs, or the displaying of things, signs and symbols themselves, or objective and external realities, drawings

1. *Al-Lum'at al-Ilahiyyeh*, p. 449.

and pictures, books and writings; they have referred to all these as examples to which the term "speech" applies – because the definition of the term speech, which means 'Making the intentions understood', can include all the above examples.

Allamah Tabatabai'i, may his soul be sanctified, says, "Speech means making the intentions known by means of sounds (*aswat*) and letters (*huruf*) whose signification is arbitrary, and this is true only in the case of man who lives in society."

So, God's speaking is not like words of men which leave the mouth and have an arbitrary signification, because God, the Most Exalted, is not corporeal to be equipped with a sound apparatus. The Qur'an has asserted that God, Almighty, speaks:

And it is not for any mortal that Allah should speak to him except by revelation or from behind a veil, or by sending a messenger and revealing by His permission what He pleases; surely He is High, Wise. (42:51)

Though speaking in the conventional and arbitrary sense is negated for God, the Almighty, the reality of speaking has been proved for Him. God's word, though not of the same type as our utterances, possesses the same effect, that is, it makes intentions understood. Speech performs the same function as do measuring rods, weights and light that exist in various forms. God's speaking is a real example of *kalam,* because it has particular effects.

It is thus understood that anything through which God, the Exalted, makes His intentions known to the Prophets, is real speech. However, neither God, the Almighty, has

described the reality of His speech to us, nor are we fully aware of it.[1]

Therefore, in explaining the sense of "speech" we can say that it does not have to be of the same type as man's speech, made up of sounds and letters.

The term *kalimah*, the word, has been used in the Qur'an, too, for cases other than the spoken form. For example, with regard to Jesus, the Qur'an says:

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﴿ ¢ZË Ý râr﴾

O followers of the Book! Do not exceed the limits in your religion, and do not speak lies against Allah, but speak the truth: Jesus, son of Mary, is only an apostle of Allah and His Word, which He communicated to Mary and a spirit from Him. (4:171)

In the above verse, Jesus, who is a physical reality, has been introduced as "the Word".

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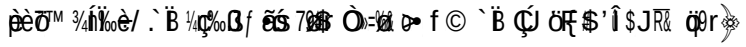
﴿ ûüÜÎ»ê9$ “ Ÿ‰ôã Ø$Zƒ Ÿw A$% ÓÉíê `Ër A$%

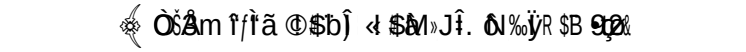
And when his Lord tried Ibrahim with certain words, he fulfilled them. He said: Surely I will make you an Imam of

1. *Al-Mizan*: Exgesis of the Qur'an, vol. 2, p. 331.

men. Ibrahim said: And of my offspring? My covenant does not include the unjust, said He. (2:124)

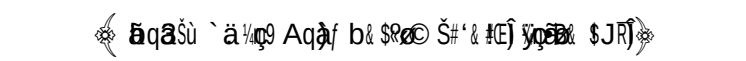
Commentators have said interpreted "the words" – stated in the above verse – to mean the sacrificing of Prophet Ibrahim's son, and Ibrahim's being thrown into the fire. Thus, it is unlike the conventional sounds and words. Elsewhere, the holy Qur'an says:





And were every tree that is in the earth made into pens and the sea to supply it with ink with seven more seas to increase it, the words of Allah would not come to an end; surely Allah is Mighty, Wise. (31:27)

Allamah Tabatabai'i – may his soul be sanctified - has taken "the words" in the above verse to mean the physical beings that come into existence by God's creative command:



His command, when He intends anything, is only to say to it: Be, so it is. (36:82).[1]

All the beings that are in the world are therefore Allah's words. The holy Qur'an considers all beings in the world as words of God that manifest, by virtue of creative

1. *Al-Mizan* Exgesis of the Qur'an, vol. 16, p. 245.

significance, the power, grandeur, knowledge, perfection and beauty of their Creator.

Hakim Sabzevari write: "The created beings are not shorn of what is valid in verbal utterances, *kalam lafzi*. *Kalam* (speech) means something that reports the meaning, and such are all the beings which - for the very reason of their creation - signify the beauty and grandeur of God, the Exalted. Every being is a sign indicating an attribute of God, the Mighty, the Glorified."[1]

The *Nahj al-Balaghah* has also interpreted "the speech" to mean ontological beings and objective truths. Imam Ali (‘a) has said in Sermon 186, “The existent beings are, therefore, God's words, indicative of His knowledge and power. "God's speech" means creating the creatures; in this way He reveals His grandeur, perfection and power.”

The late Sadr al-Muta'allihin has quoted certain gnostics to have said, "The first word that came to the contingent was "*Be*", an ontological word. So, the world was created by nothing but by *kalam*, speech. The whole universe is one among other varieties of speech."[2]

The above, thus, implies that Islamic sages believe in two kinds of kalam for God, the Exalted: the creative speech, and the legislative codifying speech:

1. *Sharh-e Manzumeh*, p. 177.
2. Mulla Sadra's al-*Asfar al-Arba'ah'* (The fourfold Journeis) ", part 2 of journey 3, p. 4.

A. The creative word and speech are the truths and the objective beings that proceed from God, the most Exalted, in three hierarchical stages:

The first is the world of universal immaterial Intelligences that come into existence by God - *creation exnihilo* - when His creative word "*Be*" issues forth. This world is called *kalamat-i tammat.*

The second is the world of *mudabbirat,* regents, and the immaterial angels, each of whom has a particular mission to carry out, and none of whom disobeys.

The third is the world of creation and the world of corporeality, such as that of human beings, animals, plants and inanimate bodies.

In these three worlds, the created beings are God's words and His real speech. As much as its capacity allows, each gives a report of the invisible mysterious world, of the infinite perfection of the Cause of all causes and of the infinite essence of God, the Glorified. That is why they are counted as the real words of Allah.

B. The legislative (*takwini*) and codifying (*tadwinni*) speech: the legislative speech is of the same type as knowledge, and is derived from knowledge of God, the Exalted. All realities of knowledge are by a "simple unit" inherent in the essence of God, the Exalted ". God, the Exalted, knows what brings us happiness and perfection – physically and spiritually - in this world and in the next. He also knows what causes wretchedness in our soul. All this knowledge - the knowledge He has of all realities of the world – which exists as a "simple unit" in the essence of God, the Exalted, is indeed identical with His essence.

Through intermediaries, it emanates from the invisible mysterious world unto the beings below, illuminating them.

It happens in this way: the hidden knowledge emanates down to *uqul-e mojarride* - the immaterial Intelligences - that are the divine *tammat* words; through it, it is conveyed to the angel of revelation (Gabriel) by whose agency it is emanated and becomes a divine gift, *ifada*, onto the illuminated heart of the Prophet. Deep within him, the Prophet hears the word of God coming to him through the angel of revelation. He understands it most clearly, and sees it by immediate knowledge.

The learning thus communicated to the Prophet's heart is yet general and simple (*baseet*), although it has come down. It is, however, not of the same type as the conventional knowledge. It is *kalam*, speech, but not of the type made up of sounds (*sawt*) and letters which we hear with our hearing organ. It is heard by means of the inner ear and the heart, not by means of the apparent ear. It is speech and reports the knowledge of the mysterious hidden world, but it is acquired all at once, not piecemeal. Thus, the processes of "making understand, ifham, and "understanding, fahm" are achieved in one single entity (*wujud*).

This divine word and the illuminating simple (*baseet*) reality then descends from the heart and Intelligence of God's messenger unto the animal soul, and from the animal soul to the faculty of vision, then becomes the source of will (*irada*), impresses the nerves and the brain and excites the tongue. The same bright simple word, now framed as words and speech, assumes a gradual pattern

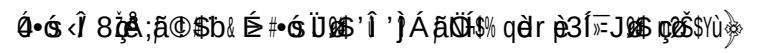
and differentiates into a command, prohibition, question and statement actualized in the air, through which it enters the ears of the believers, and enters into their hearts or is recorded by authors in books after it has passed through other stages.

It is the divine word that has, throughout all these stages, descended and actualized in various forms of existence – all of which are God's words and report the hidden knowledge and mysterious essence of God, the most Exalted.

As noted above, a group of Qur'an commentators and Islamic sages who have taken the aforementioned verses as evidence have announced that physical beings are also words of God. A bit of reflection, however, shows that "words" used in the above verses have their conventional meaning, the articulated "utterances" or their meanings.

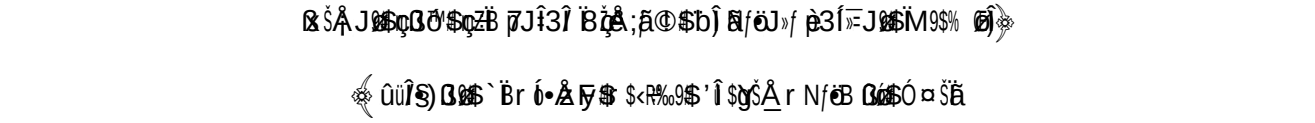
Jesus, the Word of God

In several Qur'anic verses, "the word" has been used to refer to Prophet Yahya too, may God bless him:



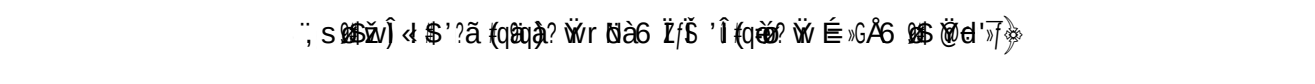
Then the angels called to him as he stood praying in the sanctuary: That Allah gives you the good news of Yahya verifying a Word from Allah, honorable and chaste and a prophet from among the good ones. (3:39)

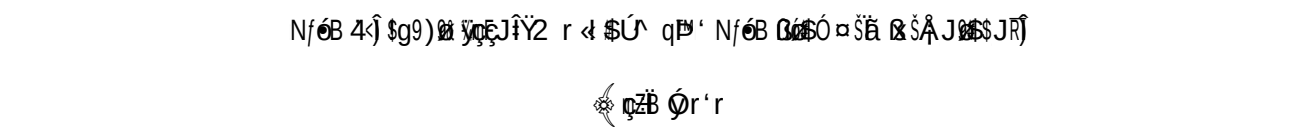
Most commentators have interpreted "the Word" to refer to Isa, Jesus (‘a).



When the angels said: O Mary, surely Allah gives you good news with a Word from Him of one whose name is the Messiah, Isa son of Mary, worthy of regard in this world and the hereafter and of those who are made near to Allah. (3:45)

In this verse too "the Word" refers to Prophet Jesus, may God bless him, and the Qur'an considers him "the Word of God".





O followers of the Book! Do not exceed the limits in your religion, and do not speak lies against Allah, but speak the truth; the Messiah, Isa son of Mary, is only an apostle of Allah and His Word, which He communicated to Mary and a spirit from Him. (4:171)

Here again Prophet Jesus (‘a) has been introduced as "the Word of God", conveyed unto Mary (‘a). It is thus understood that Messiah's being a Word is such that it can be conveyed to his mother, Mary (‘a), just as utterances and speech can.

This type of "word" is better understood in another verse of the Qur'an:

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She said: My Lord! Wherefore shall there be a son born to me, and man has not touched me? He said: Even so, Allah creates what He pleases; when He has decreed a matter, He says to it, "Be", and it is. (3:47)

These verses tell us that the word which was conveyed unto Mary (‘a) was the command *kun*, "Be", issued from God, the Almighty. As the effect of this creative word, the life-germ of Isa (‘a) clotted in Mary's (‘a) womb non-naturally impregnating her. This point has been made clearer in another verse:

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Surely the likeness of Isa is with Allah as the likeness of Adam; He created him from dust, then said to him, Be, and he was. (3:59)

It is thus understood that Prophet Jesus (‘a) and Prophet Adam (‘a) shared the common peculiarity of having come into existence non-naturally and upon God's command. By the Qur'anic phrase "*Word…communicated onto Mary*" it means "*Be*". Jesus (‘a) has been called "the Word" because the name of that which is the cause, *sabab*, (*Be)*, has been given to that which is caused, (Isa). He is called "the Word of God" because he has been created by God's command. Of course all creatures have been and are being created by God's command, but Prophet Jesus', (‘a) privilege is that

he was created without a father - by God's direct command - just like Prophet Adam (ʿa) who was created without father and mother, but merely by God's command.

Commenting on the above Qur'anic verse, Shaykh Isma'il Haqqi writes, "Isa (ʿa) was born by means of God's word and the command "*Be*", without the mediation of father and the life-germ. Although all that exists come into existence upon God's word "*Be*", by the instrumentality of the means, because the command "*Be*" applies, in the first place, to fathers and then to children. This was not the case with Prophet Jesus (ʿa). The command was directed to him, in Mary's (ʿa) womb, while he did not have a father. Thus, Jesus (ʿa) came into existence upon the word "*Be*"; and "*Be*" is the word of God communicated to Mary (ʿa); this is why Jesus (ʿa) is called "The Word".[1]

Muhammad Rashid Rida's comment on the above Qur'anic verse is: "Although all beings come into existence upon God's creative word "*Be*" – and this is not just peculiar to Jesus (ʿa), and since the producing of objects is customarily attributed to particular means, and this – the entering of male life-germ into the mother's womb and its blending with the mother's - did not exist in the case of Prophet Jesus (ʿa), then this creation has been attributed to the word of God. The term "word" used for the outcome refers to this point; or the term "word" has been applied to the result and to what has been caused to express an excess in quality.[2]

1. *Tafsir-e Ruh al-Bayan*, vol. 2, p. 328.
2. *Tafsir al-Manar*, vol. 3, p. 304.

In short, the intention of the term "Word" in the aforementioned verses is Prophet Jesus (ʿa). The reason for giving such a name is because he was born miraculously upon the word *kun*, God's creative word, without father. That is why in verse 171 of *Nisa* Chapter, the holy Qur'an uses a pronoun of feminine gender - *ha* ها - when referring to the term "كلمه = word – which is feminine in Arabic and says " القاها ". But in verse 45 of chapter *The Family of Imran* quoted above a masculine pronoun has been used - ه attached to the phrases"اسمه المسيح" - "*him … whose name is the Messiah* - and here the pronoun refers back to *kalimah* which here is figuratively masculine. Allamah Tabataba'i has also interpreted "the word", used in the above verses, in a similar manner.[1]

Other commentators have mentioned other probabilities which are not in conformity with the outward aspect of the verses.[2]

From what has been said, it is understood that in regard to Jesus (ʿa) the application of "the Word" is metaphorical.

"The Word" in Christianity

In the Gospels, "the Word" has been used to mean Prophet Jesus (ʿa). In John's Gospel we read:

"Before the world was created, the Word already existed; he was with God, and he was the same as God. From the very beginning, the Word was with God. Through him

1. *Al-Mizan* Exegesis of the Qur'an, vol. 3, p. 210.
2. Ibid, p. 209; *Tafsir al-Kabir*, vol. 8, p. 35; *al-Manar*, vol. 3, p. 304.

God made all things; not one thing in all creation was made without him. The Word was the source of life, and this life brought light to mankind. The light shines in the darkness and the darkness has never put it out.

God sent his messenger, a man named John, who came to tell people about the light, so that all should hear the message and believe. He himself was not the light; he came to tell about the light. This was the real light – the light that comes into the world and shines on all mankind.

The Word was in the world, and though God made the world through him, yet the world did not recognize him. He came to his own country, but his own people did not receive him. Some, however, did receive him and believed in him; so he gave them the right to become God's children. They did not become God's children by natural means, that is, by being born as the children of a human father; God himself was their Father.

The Word became a human being and, full of grace and truth, lived among us. We saw his glory, the glory which he received as the Father's only Son.

John spoke about him. He cried out, "This is the one I was talking about when I said, 'He comes after me, but he is greater than I am, because he existed before I was born.'

Out of the fullness of his grace he has blessed us all, giving us one blessing after another.

God gave the Law through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ."[1]

The Christians have interpreted "the Word" to mean Jesus (ʿa). "The Word means our Lord Jesus Christ."[2]

They interpret the Biblical phrase in this way in order to make it match with the doctrine of Trinity. A bit of deliberation, however, presents the likelihood that it implies the same point the holy Qur'an has mentioned concerning the word with relation to Prophet Jesus (ʿa). It can be said that "the Word" is coterminous with God's creative command, that is, "*Be*"; "the Word", therefore, means "to bring into existence", (*ijad*), an attribute of God, the Exalted, that has been a reality before the objects existed, and is a source for the existents to emerge – and this happened to Jesus (ʿa), because Mary's (ʿa) pregnancy did not take place as is usual – through the agency of the husband - but miraculously, and only upon God's command "*Be*". This is why he is called the Word of God.

Is Speech Pre-eternal or Created?

It was previously proved that the followers of the divine religions believe in some kind of speech for God, the Exalted, and take "speaking, *takallum,* and being spoken to, *taklim*" as attributes of God. They hold that God the most Exalted, has spoken to His prophets and through them has sent people messages. They have no doubt in it. But what has been much argued is the *huduth*, "newness"

1. *Good News Bible*, 1992; New Testament, p. 123.
2. *Dictionary of the Bible.*

versus "pre-existence", *qidam*, of God's speech, which has been one of the earliest and most eventful discussions of the science of *kalam*, throughout the history of Islam. It is not an issue particular to Muslims, but has been in circulation among Christians too. In view of the Muslim – Christian correlations, we can guess that it has had mutual impressions on doctrinal matters which could be confirmed by referring to books on history and speculative theory, *kalam*. There are in fact various ideas concerning the speech of God, the Exalted, and its *huduth* and *qidam*:

A. The Hanbalites

The followers of Ahmad b. Hanbal hold that "God's speech consists of sounds, and sound letters (*huruf*). It subsists in God, the Exalted, and is pre-existent, *qadim*". Some consider the Qur'an pre-existent, and have given the following reasons in support of their claim:

First: God's essence, *dhat*, is pre-existent. Second: Speech is His attribute. Third: The attribute of the pre-existent must itself be pre-existent, because new *hadith* cannot be with the pre-existent, because it will bring about alteration, which does not agree with "Necessity of Being", *wujub-e wujud*. Therefore, the speech of God which is His attribute will also be pre-existent."[1]

As an answer to the Hanbalites, it can be said: there is no doubt that God is speaking, *mutakallem*; but the speaker is a person from whom speech issues forth (defined as: *sadara an-hu al-kalam*) not a person on whom speech

1. *Sharh al-Mawaqif*, p. 192, vol. 8; *Sirat al-Haqq*, vol. 1, p. 294.

subsists (*qama bihi al-kalam*). God is attributed with the quality speech, *takallum*, not with speaking, *kalam*. Speaking is a created, *hadith* matter, imposed on the air, not on the essence of God, the Glorified. "Speech" means: essence, *dhat*, is the origin and source for the production of utterances. And this can be pre-existent.

Qadi Izz-ud-Din has considered the Hanbalites' idea as necessarily refutable. He writes, "Verbal expressions are gradually produced. The occurrence of each letter (*harf*) requires the termination of the letter preceding it - this is *hadith*. Speech which is made up of these generated events (*hawadith*) will also be created. Speech is thus generated in time; it has a beginning and an end. It will then be new".

B. The Karamiyyeh

The followers of the Karamiyyeh sect hold that God's word is made up of sounds and letters, is created, *hadith*, and subsists in the essence of God, the Exalted. They have said, "*Hadith* (*new*) may subsist in the eternal (*qadim*)."[1]

Allamah Hilli refutes the Karamiyyeh's idea and says, "The Necessity of God’s Being opposes the infusion of accidents into His essence for three reasons:

1. If generated events occur in the essence of God, they will bring about alterations and reactions in His essence, and this is in opposition to Necessity of Being. Alterations

1. *Sharh al-Mawaqif*, p. 92, vol. 8.

and reactions are qualities of physique, and God is not material, nor is He corporeal."

2. If the producing and demanding cause of such a new event – *hadith* - is the essence of God, then the originated thing itself must be eternal since the cause is pre-existent; but you consider it new. If the cause is something other than the Necessary Being himself, it will be necessary for the Necessary Being to be in need of the other (*ghayr*), and this does not agree with the Necessity of Being.

3. If the originated matter is an attribute of Perfection, it will again be an impossible premise because God the Exalted, who possesses all attributes of Perfection, cannot be without it. If it is an attribute of imperfection, it is impossible to qualify God's essence with it, because the attributes of imperfection have no way into the essence of God, the most Exalted."[1]

C. The Ash'ariyah

The followers of the Ash'ariyah believe, that speech is pre-existent and subsists in God, the Exalted.

Abul-Hasan Ash'ari says, "God the Exalted, is speaker (*mutakallem*), and His speech is pre-existent. Because He is the Lord and rules over the people, and the ruler issues commands to people and prohibits them from something, He is, therefore, the commander, *Amer*, and the one who prohibits, *Nahi*. Thus, He commands to something pre-existent, or to something that has come into being, *hadith*.

1. *Kashf al-Murad fi Sharh Tajrid al-'Itiqad*, p. 228.

If it is new, He has either created it in His Essence, *dhat*, or elsewhere, or without a location. His originating it in His essence is impossible, because it will require that God, the Exalted, be a place for the created things (*hawadith*) and this is impossible. It is also impossible to create the speech elsewhere, because the location will be qualified by relevant qualities and will be called speaker (*mutakallem*). Also, it is impossible that God should create the speech in other-than place, because this is unreasonable. Therefore, God's speech must be pre-existent and subsist in him and must be His attribute."[1]

Abul-Hasan Ash'ari then continues saying "God's speech is no more than one single entity, named by such defining phrases as a command, prohibition, narration, report, promise and threat, while it is no more than one single reality. Utterances sent down to the Prophets by means of the tongue of the angel are indications (*dalalat*) and significations of the eternal speech, not His speech per se. The signification is itself created and new (*hadith*), but the signified is pre-existent and eternal. The differences between recitation, *qira'ah,* and what is recited, *maqru'*, and between reading, *telawat*, of the Qur'an and that which is read are like the difference between the reminder, *dhikr*, and the reminded, *madhkur*. The reminder is created but that which is reminded is eternal."[2]

Having quoted the above, Shahrestani defines the speech as Ash'ari does, and says, "Ash'ari holds that speech

1. *Milal wa Nihal*, vol. 1, p. 95.
2. Ibid, p. 96.

subsists in the speaker's soul, *nafs*, and is different from words and utterances (*alfaz*). A phrase is a mark of human speech; the speaker is, therefore, a person in whom speech subsists.

The Mu'tazilites, on the contrary, maintain that the speaker is a person from whom speech issues. Thus, according to Ash'ari when the term *kalam*, speech, is used to refer to an expression, either it is a metaphorical application or the two might be univocal."[1]

Based on the above, the Ash'arites consider the articulated speech and expressions as occurrences that are gradually produced and created, and hold that they cannot subsist in God's Essence nor are they His real speech. They take God's real speech to be the meanings of the uttered words; these are eternal and subsist in the Essence of God, the most Exalted. *Kalam-i Nafsi*, essential speech is explained by the Ash'arites thus: "Before he begins to speak and while he is uttering something, a speaker has in his mind concepts and meanings of the utterances that he going to produce later. Articulated utterances report these. While he is uttering something, the speaker actually reports his own mental concepts and conveys them to listeners. The speaker's mental concepts and meanings are therefore called essential speech.

They say: "Essential speech is no more than one single reality that not only changes into various forms but can include writing and pointing to something as well.

1. Ibid, p. 96.

They have said: "Essential speech is not knowledge, *ilm*, because at times one may report something of which he has no knowledge, or he may have knowledge of the contrary state of affairs.

Essential speech, *kalam-i nafsi*, is not volition, *iradeh*, either because at times the speaker issues a command; but he does not have the intention to have it carried out, because he desires to test the person to whom the command is addressed.

Therefore, essential speech is not of the same type as knowledge, will and non-will, but is something else: a unit that differentiates into a statement, command, prohibition, question, direct address, etc. after it is applied to a specific subject.

They say, "Speech in its reality is the essential speech which is eternal and subsists in the Essence of God, the most Exalted. That is why it is called *mutakallam.*"[1]

The Imamiyyah and the Mu'tazilah have considered the idea of the essential speech to be absurd and illogical, and have refuted it, saying that:

First*:* the term real speaking, *kalam-i haqiqi*, is customarily and philologically used to refer to the sounds and articulated letters the speaker produces in the air, not to the concepts and meaning of these expressions. It is not a scholarly attempt to take the words of a certain poet as support to prove such an important issue."

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1. *Sharh al-Mawaqif*, vol. 8, p. 193; *Shawariq al-Ilham*, pp. 414 and 555; *Lum'at al-Illahiyyeh*, p. 331; *Kashf al-Murad*, p. 224.

Second*:* We admit that words stored in the mind of the speaker contain concepts and meanings but these are nothing but knowledge of the concepts and assertions. While he is speaking the speaker perceives them in his mind and talks accordingly. Such perceptions sometimes, but not always, go together with the speaker's assertions. When the speaker reports something contrary to his own opinion, he visualizes the words but does not affirm them.

In test cases, too, there exist words, their concepts and the will to utter them, although the speaker may not be seriously determined to have the task carried out. Therefore, there is nothing but concepts, assertions and volitions. There is nothing to be called essential speech."[1]

Allamah Hilli negates the idea of essential speech, and says "It is an irrational saying, because it is inconceivable to affirm a concept that is neither a command nor a prohibition, neither a statement nor a report, but is however eternal. Affirmation depends on conceptualization."[2]

D.The Imamiyyah and the Mu'tazilah

Having rejected the Ash'arites, these two Law schools claim that God's speech was originated (*hadith*). They say: "Similar to man's, God's speech is made up of letters, *huruf*, and sounds that signify particular meanings; it (the speech in question) is produced upon the Preserved Tablet, or in angel Gabriel's heart or in the air – with the

1. *Sirat al-Haqq*, vol. 1, p. 298; *Lum'at al-Illahiyyeh*, p. 441.
2. *Kashf al-Murad*, p. 225.

difference that man needs the tongue, the mouth and the place of articulation for verbal utterances, but God does not. Therefore, speaking is gradual, sequential and created, imposed on the air or elsewhere, not upon God's essence. By the term God "speaking", it is meant "*sadara anhu al-kalam* – speech issues forth from Him -, not *qama bihi al-kalam*, in Whom speech subsists. In other words, speech emanates from the speaker, as blows do in the case of a person who strikes others, or killing in the case of a murderer; it is not infused in him as is knowledge in the knower, capability in the capable, and black and white in objects. Thus, *takallum* - that is the production of sounds and letters - is God's attribute, but not the speech that He creates.

They have said, "God, the most Exalted, creates meaningful sounds and letters - differentiated into statements, commands, prohibitions, and questions – in the Preserved Tablet, or in Gabriel's (ʿa) heart or in the Prophet's (s) heart, or in the air or onto an object like tree through which Prophet Moses (ʿa) was addressed. In these ways, God communicates His message. Therefore, God's speech, *kalam*, is a quality of His action, and contingent, like creation, provision, revival, *ihya*, and causing death."[1]

Miqdad b. Abdullah Seewari writes, "By God's speaking it does not mean that He speaks with particular organs as men do, because God, the most Exalted, is not corporeal to

1. *Sirat al-Haqq*, vol. 1, p. 312; *Lum'at al-Ilahiyyeh*, pp. 441 and 444; *Shawariq al-Ilham*, p. 555; *Kashf al-Murad*, pp. 170 and 224.

need organs, but it means that God creates sounds and letters in a place."[1]

Allamah Hilli and Fadhil Miqdad also consider God's speech consisting of sounds and letters, *huruf*.[2]

When asked how God, the Most Exalted, spoke to Prophet Moses (ʻa) - because speaking requires a certain quality to overcome the speaker - Shaykh Mufid answered: God, the Most Exalted, spoke to Prophet Moses (ʻa) by creating the speech in the tree or in the air, and it came to Moses (ʻa) ear. Speaking does not require a quality to overcome the speaker, but requires a location to uphold it whether or not the quality overcomes the speaker."[3]

Elsewhere, the late Shaykh Mufid says, "God speaks, but not through the instrumentality of organs. He creates letters and sounds that denote meanings in an object, as He did it in a tree while He was addressing Moses (ʻa)."[4]

The Mu'tazilites and the Imamiyyah hold that God's word consists of significant sounds and letters which God, the Most Exalted creates in the air or in other objects and thus communicates His intention to the Prophet. God's word is gradual and occurs in time. When they refer to God speaking, these two Law schools mean the production of sounds and letters, and take God's volition as the source of

1. *Al-I'timad fi Sharh-e Wajib al-I'tiqad*, p. 68.
2. *Al-Bab al-Hadi'Ashar*, p. 28
3. *Musannafat Shaykh Mufid*, vol. 6 subtitled: *al-Masa'l al-'Askariyyeh*, p. 43.
4. Ibid, *al-Nukat al-Itiqadiyyah*, vol. 10, p. 27.

the speech issuing forth without the need for the tongue and the mouth.

Objections*:* This idea has been criticized as follows:

Criticism One*:* If God's will and power to create sounds and letters is created (*hadith*), it would necessarily mean that God, the most Exalted, is a place for generated things, *hawadith*, but this was proved to be false). If He is eternal, it would require that His speech be eternal too, because the effect (*ma'lul*) cannot violate the cause (*il'a*).

Answer*:* God's Will, *iradeh*, and power, which are sources for the speech are the same as His essence, and pre-existent, and one single command, applied for the creation of events through the sequence of cause and effect, the actualization of necessary conditions, and the passage of time. God's will required that throughout time - whenever it was necessary and when there was a man capable of hearing God's word – a prophet would be appointed. He would then create the sounds and through them communicate His messages.

Criticism Two*:* If God's word consists of these same sounds, letters and combinations that are particular to human beings, then those other people who are present at the time of the divine conversation, should also be able to hear God's voice; but as history and traditions testify, such has not been the case. There were times when the Prophet's (s) family and some companions were present, and even observed the signs of the revelation, but did not hear God's words.

Criticism Three*:* It has been mentioned that speed of communication and invisibility to others are two

components of the revelation. Now, if God's word consists of ordinary sounds and letters, then revelation will be lacking these conditions, and this makes the definition inapplicable. As a result the Imamiyyah's and the Mu'tazilah's belief concerning God's word is problematic and ambiguous

The two sects Jubbaiyeh and the Behshmiyyeh also maintain that: "God speaks in a language that He creates in a place." To them the reality of speech is: "orderly sounds and letters. The speaker is the person who produces the speech, not a person on whom speech subsists."[1]

E. Mu'ammar b. 'Ibad and Certain Christians

These people believe that God, the Exalted, has no word, *kalam*, and that the Qur'an is not an act of God, but the act of the thing from which speech is heard. Mu'ammar b. 'Ibad believed that God, the most Exalted, is the creator of the bodies, but not of the accidents, *'aradhs*. Accidents are acts of substances, *jawahir*. Therefore, speech and the Qur'an, cannot be acts of God, because they are accidents.

Shahrestani has quoted Mu'ammar to have said, "God created nothing but bodies. As for accidents, they are the products of the bodies produced by nature; as for instance, fire produces burning, and the sun heat and the moon the coloration of things; or by choice as, for instance, animal beings produce motion and rest, aggregation and segregation."

1. *Milal wa Nihal*, vol. 1, p. 80.

Shahrestani continues saying: "From what Mu'ammer has said, it would become necessary that God have no speech, *kalam*, at all because speech is an accident. If God had no speech, He would not command nor would He prohibit; if he did not command nor prohibit, He would have no Law, *shariah*."[1]

Abul-Hasan Ash'ari writes "The followers of Mu'ammar consider the Qur'an to be an accident. *'Aradh* and accident, they maintain, is of two kinds: those which are the acts of animate beings, and those which are acts of inanimate ones. The latter cannot be an act of the animate beings.

These people believe that the Qur'an is created, and an accident; God, the most Exalted, cannot have done it, because they consider it is impossible for the accidents to be acts of God. They imagine that the Qur'an is the act of the place where it has been heard. If it is heard through a tree, it is the act of the tree; if it is heard somewhere else, it is the act of that particular locality."[2]

"As reported by Ibn al-Rawandi and Khayyat: "Mu'ammar maintained that the Quran is not the work of God, nor - as according to the view of the generality of people - an attribute in the essence of God; it is rather the work of nature."[3]

In his book, *the philosophy of The Kalam*, Wolfson writes: "Combining these various reports and taking them to be

1. Ibid, pp. 66-67.
2. Ibid, p. 66; quoted from *Maqalat al-Islamiyyin*.
3. *The Philosophy of Kalam*, p. 298.

mutually complementary, we may restate the view of Mu'amar as follows: The Word of God is neither an uncreated attribute in God, as held by the orthodox, nor a created accident in the Preserved Tablet, as held by the Mu'tazilites, nor even, as Nazzam says, a body created by God in the air. In fact, there is no Word of God. What is called the Word of God is only a word produced by certain bodies which were especially created by God capable of producing themselves a word, which would communicate to men certain messages from God. Such especially endowed bodies created by God for the purpose of communicating His Word to men were, for instance, the bush, through which God spoke to Moses (ʻa), and the various prophets, including Muhammad (s), through whom He spoke to mankind. It was, however, only the body of the bush and the bodies of the prophets that were directly created by God and endowed by Him with a special power to produce a Word which is figuratively called the Word of God. The act of producing the Word, however, is either by nature, as in the case of the bush, or by choice, as in the case of the prophets. The Quran therefore is a man-made work; it is divine in the sense that the Prophet who produced it was especially endowed by God with the power to produce it and also in the sense that it expresses the will and design of God."[1]

Some Christian scholars have expressed similar ideas. "Barth maintains that the primary revelation was the

1. *The Philosophy of Kalam*, pp. 277-8, Harry Austryn Wolfson, Harvard University Press, l976

person of Christ, the Word made flesh. Scripture is a purely human record witnessing this revelatory event. God acted in Christ, not in the dictation of an infallible book."[1]

Elsewhere he writes: "God had revealed himself, not in the dictation of an infallible book, but by His Presence in the lives of Christ, the prophets, and the people of Israel. Scripture was then not revelation but a human witness to the human experience of revelation."[2]

In summary, the above means that the Qur'an and other divine books are not produced by God, but are prepared by men (prophets) whom God, the Most Exalted, has created in a manner that they report God's intentions through their words. Their commands, prohibitions, information and warnings are likewise attributed to be God's. The same doctrine is ascribed to Mu'ammar b. 'Ebad, who presented the following in support of his argument: Speech is accident, and God creates only bodies not substances; therefore, speech cannot be God's action, but is the act of man or of the place where it has issued forth.

The above negates the doctrine of Revelation and the speech of God; it opposes the principles and foundations of the divine religions and disagrees with abundant texts in the holy Qur'an, multitudes of verses concerning God's speaking with the Prophets. Some examples (being repeated here) are:

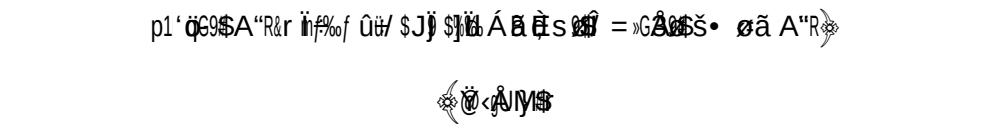
1. *Issues in Science and Religion*, p. 117.
2. *Issues in Science and Religion*, pp.105-6

We have made some of these apostles to excel the others, among them are they to whom Allah spoke. (2:253)

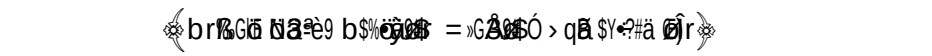
And (We sent) apostles We have mentioned to you before and apostles we have not mentioned to you; and to Musa, Allah addressed His Word, speaking (to him). (4:164)

And it is not for any mortal that Allah should speak to him except by revelation or from behind a veil, or by sending a messenger and revealing by His permission what He pleases; surely He is High, Wise. (42:51)

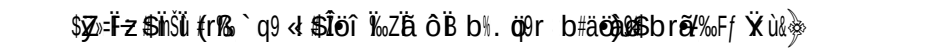
Besides the above, many verses clearly state that the Book, sometimes coterminous with the Qur'an, is revealed by God, the most Exalted:



He has revealed to you the Book with truth, verifying that which is before it, and He revealed the Tarot and the Evangel aforetime. (3:3)



And when We gave Moses the Book and the distinction that you might walk aright. (2:53)



Do they not then meditate on the Qur'an? And if it were from any other than Allah, they would have found in it many a discrepancy. (4:82)

As regards the Revelation, the holy Qur'an says:

﴿÷=/ .` Br ¾ïÎ Nä‘ÉR Ţ ã#äöøø#‹»d ¥‹Î ÓÇrÉ﴾

And this Quran has been revealed to me that with it I may warn you and whomsoever it reaches. (6:19)

﴿ïƒ‰ƒ û/ $JÏ $ÏÏ Á ã‘, s ø qè É »Gøø` Ï 7 øÎ ŽŽømr¿ ü Ï ø﴾

And that which We have revealed to you of the Book, that is the truth verifying that which is before it. (35:31)

﴿ø Šîæ øŠøm ãø© Ï š c #äöøø‘ ÿ=Ç9 7 Ïr﴾

And most surely you are made to receive the Quran from the Wise, the Knowing God. (27:6)

From these, and scores of other verses, it is understood that God, the Most Exalted, has talked to the Prophets and sent people messages. The holy Qur'an is the word of God, sent down from Him. The commands and prohibitions are from God, and can be counted as the fundamental necessities of Islam.

In answer to Mu'ammar b. 'Ebad's argument, it can be said that just as God, the Most Exalted, is the creator of bodies, He has the power to create sounds and letters in the air or in some other body without the need for a tongue and a place of articulation of sounds. It is man who uses his mouth and the movement of his tongue in producing waves in the air around him; these waves form letters and words that denote particular meanings. God, the Most

Exalted, has the power to produce these same movements and waves in the air without resorting to body organs. Therefore, the terms speech and speaking have their true meanings when used in relation with God, the Glorified. The holy Qur'an *is* the word of God, His work, *masnu'*, whereas The term "Word", *kalimah*, used in the Qur'anic verse concerning the Prophet Jesus (ʿa), is a figurative application.

In closing, it is necessary to mention that, although the belief that God is speaking, *mutakallem*, and that speech issues forth from Him, is a necessity in the divine religions, how it happens is not clearly known, and is one of the puzzling problems concerning revelation.

THE QUR'AN

The divine Book sent from God, the most Exalted, to the Prophet of Islam (s) is called the Qur'an, a name that has occurred in many Qur'anic verses, exemplified below:

﴿÷=/ .` Br ¾ïÎ Nä‘ÉRT[ð#äëàø‹»d ¥‹Î ÓÇré﴾

And this Qur'an has been revealed to me that with it I may warn you and whomsoever it reaches. (6:19)

﴿ûüÏÏ‰s3øŠçÅ;ñr ðqø š† ïf ÓÉÏ “ ¼ñ b#äëàø‹»d bÎ﴾

Surely this Qur'an guides to that which is most upright and gives good news to the believers. (17:9)

﴿‹ $Âc rß `Ï 3ž Iøñb¿ ð#äëàø‹»d b. $Br﴾

And this Qur'an is not such as could be forged by those besides Allah. (10:37)

﴿ÎB ð#äëàr É»GÅ6 ø‹M»f#ä 7tï﴾

These are the verses of the Book and (of) a Qur'an that makes (things) clear. (15:1)

The phrase "*This Qur'an*" refers to facts that have passed on the tongue of Prophet Muhammad (s) in the form of especial words, expressions, and sentences, and were

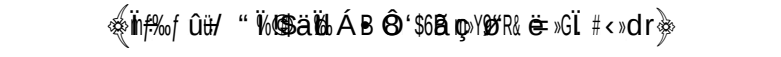
conveyed to the ears of the listeners, and upon his order, were written down – cast in the mold of orthography and recorded upon sheets, *alwah*. These sprang forth from the blessed heart of the Prophet (s) which was the center for the Revelation to descend upon and for the divine sciences to emanate from.

"Nuzul"[1], the Revelation, of the Qur'an

Multitudes of verses say that the Qur'an was sent down from God, revealed by God the Glorified:

Surely We have revealed this Book to you with the truth. (4:105)

This is because Allah has revealed the Book with the truth. (2:176)



And this is a Book We have revealed, blessed, verifying that which is before it. (6:92)

In the above verses and scores of others, the Arabic terms *inzal,* and *tanzil* which when they are taken literally, they respectively mean: 'cause to send down', and the verbal

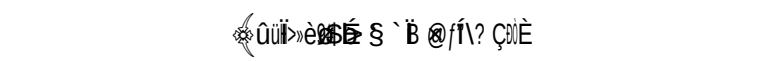
1. Please follow the discussions below for an explanation of the technical terms "*nuzul*" and *tanzil"* in relation to the revelation of the Qur'an. (*Translator*)

noun from *nazzala*, 'meaning sent down' and their derivations have been used when referring to the Revelation of the Book (the Qur'an).

Raghib writes: "The term *nuzul* primarily means to come down from a higher plane."[1]

Originally and literally considered, *nuzul* means: the descent of something from a higher plane to a lower plane. But this definition is inapplicable in the case of the holy Qur'an because God, the Almighty, is not corporeal and does not have a place high up somewhere, so that one might conceive of the Qur'an "coming down" from Him. The word "*nuzul*" must mean something else.

A number of the Qur'anic verses state that the Qur'an that is recited and written down, is preceded by a higher existence, *wujud*. This means that this same Qur'an we have at our disposal also exists in a higher plane whence it has been revealed. The holy Qur'an says:

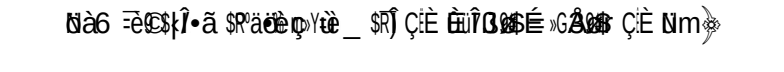


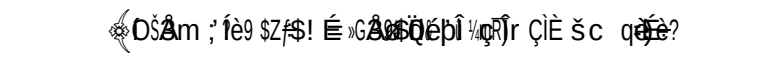
Most surely it is in an honored Qur'an; in a book that is protected; none shall touch it save the purified; a revelation by the Lord of the worlds. (56:77-80)

From this verse, it is understood that the Qur'an exists in an invisible book, *kitab-e Maknun*. The meaning of *kitab-e*

1. *Al-Mufradat fi Gharib al-Qur'an.*

Maknun has not been made clear. In another verse we read:





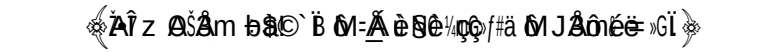
Ha Mim; I swear by the Book that makes things clear; Surely We have made it an Arabic Qur'an that you may understand; And surely it is in the umm al-Kitab (the source of the scripture) with us, truly elevated, full of wisdom. (43:1-4)

The above verse also clearly says that the Quran has a superior and perfect existence, and that it has been made into the Arabic Quran and has been revealed; but no explanation has been given concerning the *umm al-kitab*.

In another verse we read:

Nay! It is a glorious Qur'an; in a guarded tablet. (85: 21-2)

The above verse clearly says that the holy Qur'an exists in the Preserved Tablet; but no explanation has been given concerning the preserved tablet. Another verse says:



(This is) a Scripture the revelation, whereof, are perfected and then expounded. It cometh from One, Wise, Informed. (11:1)

It is understood from the above verse that the Qur'an was at a perfect place, simple, *basit*, in form and unchanged. Later, it was revealed and changed in form.

In his commentary on the above verses, Allamah Tabataba'i writes "From a consideration of the verses, it becomes clear that the articulated and written Qur'an that is in Arabic and was revealed to the holy Prophet (s) over a period of twenty three years, exists at a higher plane of existence, where there is no difference nor degrees, where the formal conceptions of Arabic or non-Arabic is meaningless. It is not like the arbitrarily agreed senses and meanings; it is a different reality, beyond our capability to understand, a position no one attains except the infallible people who are secure from the filth of sin. This exalted position is sometimes explained by this Qur'anic verse:

﴿ÐŠÅm ;'íè9 $Z≠$! É »GÅ⁄ÅQépÎ﴾

And surely it is in the original of the Book with Us, truly elevated, full of wisdom. (43:3)

And sometimes by this one:

﴿âqãÅ0 8ÿ9 'Î ÇËÈ Ó×ÅÞ h#äëèqè @/﴾

Nay! It is a glorious Qur'an, in a guarded tablet. (85:21-2)

And at other times by the verse:

﴿5qãB 5= »GÏ 'Î ÇÈ xì. h#äÞ9 ¼çÑ﴾

Verily, it is Qur'an honorable, in a Book hidden. (56:77-8)

All of which report a truth: God, the Most Exalted, has made that same concealed Qur'an into Arabic, into verses

and chapters, and revealed it to the heart of the Prophet (s) to be made understandable for human beings. This is what *nuzul* of the Qur'an means."[1]

In his discussion concerning "the *nuzul* (revelation) of the Qur'an", Sadr al-Muta'allihin, refers to the existence of various stations, *maqamat* (ranks), and writes "The Qur'an and the revealed verses are exactly as important as the verbal-intellectual tokens, *ayat*, at one station, and with ordinances on sheets, *kutub lawhiyyeh*, at another, and with the created concrete existents at other station, and are identical with utterances heard by virtue of perceptive senses, or the impressions printed in the Qur'an which are visible by virtue of the sense of sight at another station. Then, the reality of the Qur'an is no more than one, existentiated in various loci and places of witnessing."[2]

Thus, although the term "*nuzul*" in relation to the Qur'an does not have the literal sense of "descent from a higher plane to a lower one", this "coming down" is, however, real, because it is a step down from the highest station – that of simplicity and immateriality to the lower station – *tafsil* – that is, differentiation into various aspects. Thus, the application of such terms *nuzul, inzal* and *tanzil* is real in the case of the Qur'an, and not metaphorical, as certain people assert.[3]

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1. *Al-Mizan* exegesis of the Qur'an, vol 2, pp. 12-16; vol. 18, pp. 82-88 and pp. 140-141.
2. *Asfar*, vol. 7, p. 30.
3. *Manahil al-'Irfan*, vol. 1, p. 34.

Manner of the Revelation of The Qur'an

The *nuzul*, revelation, of the Qur'an was not in the form of *tajafi*, that is, it did not detach from the original rank it possessed in order to descend to the station of *tafsil*, differentiation. Rather, the revelation is theophanized: the Divine word, *kalam*, emanates from the invisible realm of simplicity and immateriality onto the lower stations of nature, multiplicity and differentiation where it manifests brightly without losing its sublime dignity. The holy Qur'an, is a cognitive phenomenon, which has originated from the limitless knowledge of God Almighty, and has been revealed. It has manifested its splendor just like the sun's light shines on the earth; this is because all scientific and non-scientific phenomena receive the gift of their existence from God, Mighty and High, through intermediaries or otherwise. He is the only Perfect and Infinite Essence from whose sublime dignity all perfections are derived, and come down. In His exalted rank He has the perfections of all concrete and scientific effects, *ma'lul* that our knowledge can perceive.

Therefore, the Qur'an that has come down, *tanazzala*, to the domain of nature in the form of chapters and verses, exists in the form of a simple, incorporeal and collective entity – in the concealed, mysterious and exalted rank of *umm al-kitab* – literally mother of the Book - where there is no mentioning of such Qur'anic divisions as *aya* (verse), *sura* (chapter), *muhkam* (clear), *muteshabeh* (ambiguous), *nasekh* (abrogating) and *mansukh* (abrogated) verses, the special and the general, Arabic and non-Arabic, because these divisions are the requirements of the world of nature.

An important question has been raised concerning the revelation, *tanazzol*, of the holy Qur'an which needs to be answered.

Question*:* In the above mentioned ranks, the Qur'an is a simple, *basit*, scientific and creative reality. At a lower station, this reality manifests itself in concepts and words that are signs to particular meanings which are arbitrarily and conventionally decided, while there is no creative link between them - and this is the reason that each nation uses certain words. Now, how can a scientific and creative reality convert into an arbitrary and conventional issue, because there should be coherence and congruity in hierarchal levels when a reality steps down?

The eminent scholar in religion, Ayatullah Jawadi Amoli has answered this problem in the following way: "Although it is necessary that there should be coherence between the chain of causes and the hierarchal degrees of a descending reality, man always lowers the intelligible realities from the domain of intellect to the home of uninterrupted prototype, *mithal-e Muttasil*; then he casts them in the mold of arbitrary or conventional acts or words appropriate in the homeland of nature. All scientific analyses of incorporeal intellectual realities – done through speaking or writing – function to lower the rank of intellectual-creative matters and clad them in arbitrary concepts, because it is man's characteristic to function as a common sense, *sensus communis*, between creation and arbitration – be it in the descending arc described above, or in the ascending arc. In this way he always discerns the subjective entity of a creative issue because of the link he establishes with the arbitrary medium: reading or hearing.

Then he enters the intellectual homeland of the subjective entity. Here, he frees himself from conventionality and arrives at the point of sheer creation.

While it is "coming down" the zenith of creative simplicity and immateriality, the process of Revelation may pass through a passage which has the capacity to function as the intermediary between the realm of creation and arbitration.

Explanation*:* The pronouncement of the Revelation and its writing down are among the active attributes of God, the Mighty and Magnificent, not among attributes of the Essence. They draw the qualities of acting from the position of action, but not Essence. In the process of communicating and revealing the Book, God's act is a combination of creation, *takwin*, and consideration, *i'tibar*, both God's prerogatives; no one else has the least influence in these two acts. God, the Glorious says:

É»GÅøëÖéþÎ¼çÑr ÇÌÈ šc qèÉe?Nà6 =èC$ŕÎ•ã $Ræëeç»Yè_ $Ñ)

﴿DŠÅm ;'íè9 $Z≠$!

Surely We have made it an Arabic Qur'an that you may understand; And surely it is in the umm al-Kitab the source of the scripture with us, truly elevated, full of wisdom. (43:2-3)

This means: just as it is the action of God to create the reality of the divine Revelation, revealing it in clear Arabic is also the action of God, the Most Exalted. It is not correct to say that the sense of the Divine words was revealed to the heart of the Prophet (s) and that the

Prophet chose certain words as garments for those teachings. If it had been so, the words and utterances could not have acquired the quality of inimitability, *I'djaz*.

As for "the passage" that is worthy enough to function as a link between creation and arbitrariness: this is most probably the blessed soul of the Messenger of God (s) because the pure soul that has detached himself from anything except the Truth and has attained nearness to God by performing the absolutely necessary, *fara'idh*, and the supererogatory acts, *navafil*, his channels of perception will be loci for God's perceiving, hearing, seeing and speaking attributes to be manifested. It is through this common channel that the creative-intellectual realities descend and the intellectual-arbitrary issues manifest themselves. The creative-intellectual issues of the world of physics, too, ascend from this homeland. If another "passage" similar to the immaculate soul of the Prophet (s) could be conceived to act as the common sense between creation and arbitration, this can also be another solution."[1]

In solving the problem of the possibility of a link between creative and arbitrary issues, Ayatullah Jawadi Amoli has referred to the sacred soul of the Prophet (s) to show that he has freed himself from anything that is not the Truth, and has attained nearness to God Almighty., The soul functions in two ways: it lowers the intellectual and creative realities to the arbitrary level, and raises arbitrary concepts to the level of rational sciences. The Prophet's (s)

1. Abdullah Jawadi Amoli, *Wahy wa Rahbari*, p. 76-78.

perceptive channels act as loci for God's hearing, seeing, and speaking. As a result, the words of the Qur'an that the pass on the tongue of the Prophet, (s) are ascribed to God, the Most Exalted.

Another solution is to say: in the final stage of the Revelation of the Qur'an, God, the Most Exalted, revealed its existential utterances in Arabic on the blessed heart of the Prophet (s). Because he had already been familiar with the concept of these utterances and words, he now becomes aware of the meaning of the terms and words, and in this way receives the Divine Revelation. Then the Prophet (s) utters the particular Qur'anic utterances according to the same existential utterances. That is why these are called God's words and a miracle. Because the revealed utterances and words are the creative realities, *haqaiq takwini* – in spite of their arbitrary indications – the problems of the link between creative and arbitrary issues is solved. It is, still, quite puzzling. God, the Most Exalted best knows the reality of the matter.

Which Was Revealed, The Meaning Or The Word?

The Qur'an consists of Arabic utterances, words and structures signifying particular meanings. It is evident that the utterances and words themselves are real and creative although the specific senses they signify are arbitrary and conventional.

A few questions have been asked: "What is the Qur'an that was revealed to the heart of the Prophet? Were only meanings revealed to the heart of the Prophet (s) and did he cast them into the mold of Arabic words and

utterances? Or, were both the meanings and words produced by God?"

There are two suggestions:

1. Most scholars in religion have accepted the second probability and have considered the Qur'an as consisting of utterances and meanings together.

Zarghani writes: "What Gabriel (‘a) revealed to the Prophet (s) were the Qur'anic utterances, beginning with the Opening Chapter, *Fatiha* until *An-Nas*. These utterances are only God's words; neither Gabriel *(‘a)* nor Muhammad (s) had a hand in producing and arranging them; God arranged them. That is why the Qur'an is called The Word of God, although Gabriel (‘a) and Muhammad (s), and millions of people after him recite it. God Himself has arranged and manifested the Qu'ranic utterances and words according to their existential entity just as we arrange our verbal utterances according to the existential speech, *kalam-i nafsi*, and produce them. Speech cannot be ascribed to anyone other than the person who has arranged it in his "self", *nafs*, and has accordingly verbalized it. It is not permissible to ascribe the Qur'an to Gabriel (‘a) and to Prophet Muhammad (s). Gabriel (‘a) was charged with the duty of communicating the Qur'anic words and utterances to the Messenger of God, (s), and he was to retain, communicate, explain, and act upon them.

The holy Qur'an says:

﴿ Ÿ Ÿ ﴾

And most surely you are made to receive the Qur'an from the Wise, the Knowing God. (27:6)

Ïmø$$Rä$)ï bqã_ö÷ ŵ šú ïï‰ÍŠA$‰ ĮM»ŸÉ‗ $ZŽ$ƒ#ä Ôûøæ 4?ÇêöÎ)r﴾

ÚÅ¬ø R Ç $)ïï `Ï ¼ãÏ¼/é÷ï þí Üc qãƒ $B Ø÷è ãÏ¼/ ÷‰‹»d Îöî Å#äöèÙÎ

Ïöø‹ >#‹ã 'îï ÅMŽÁ ãï Î) Ï‰{‰þöö † ‹) Ø÷r qã$B ŵ) ÏÎ?‰ ï Î)

﴿Ò‹Ïãã

And when Our clear communications are recited to them, those who do not hope for Our meeting say: Bring a Qur'an other than this or change it. Say: It does not beseem me that I should change it of my self; I follow naught but what is revealed to me. Surely I fear, if I disobey my Lord, the punishment of a mighty day. (10:15)

It is evident from the above verses that the Qur'anic words have been revealed by God, the Most Exalted; otherwise, how could the Qur'an be called a miracle? The sayings of Prophet Muhammad (s) are not miracles. If the Qur'anic words were not from God, the Most Exalted, how could they be ascribed to Him? Although in Qur'anic Chapter 9, *Baraat, Repentance*, verse 6, we read:

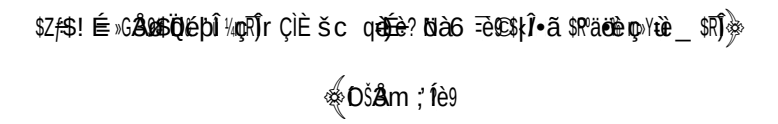
﴿‹ï $N»=. ì Jó¡„ ÓÏ@n ïöÅ'ù 8 '$ f FÖ'$šú üÏÎô ÏŠ$`Ï Ó‰n‰ ï)r﴾

And if one of the idolaters seeks protection from you, grant him protection till he hears the word of Allah.

There is unanimity in the Islamic community that Qur'anic utterances and words have come from God."[1]

1. *Manahil al-'Irfan*, vol. 1, pp. 41-4.

Besides, the holy Qur'an says:



Surely We have made it an Arabic Qur'an that you may understand. And surely it is in the original of the Book with Us, truly elevated, full of wisdom.

From this verse, too, it is understood that God, the Most Exalted, has made the Qur'an in Arabic; thus, the words have come from Him".

What Zarghani has said above has been challenged in this way:

Part A*:* As regards the revelation of the Qur'an someone may say: During the Revelation, the meanings of the Qur'anic utterances were communicated to the heart of the Prophet (s), and he then cast the exalted meanings into the mould of particular words and uttered them for people to hear them.

Part B*:* In answer to Zarghani's question who had asked: If the Qur'anic words were produced by the Prophet (s), how can the Qur'an be a miracle? The Qur'anic utterances were proclaimed by the Prophet (s), in a way that no one else could produce the like of them – this is inimitability, a miraculous power which God, the Most Exalted, gifted him with.

Part C*:* In answer to the argument derived from the verse which says:

﴿šc qèdÊe? Nà6 =eC$¦Î•ã $Rïäèç»Yè_ $R]﴾

Surely We have made it an Arabic Qur'an that you may understand.

It can be said: because the Qur'anic meanings have been inspired by God Almighty to the Prophet (s), who because of his God-given extraordinary power miraculously produced the Qur'anic words, the Qur'an in Arabic has been ascribed to God Almighty.

However, because the lofty Qur'anic meanings have been revealed by God, the Most Exalted, to the Prophet (s), and by Divine approval have appeared in the form of particular utterances, words and structures, therefore, they are all words of God, the Mighty and the Magnificent.

Objection Two

A number of theologians, believed that only the Qur'anic meanings had been inspired into the heart of the Prophet (s), but the words and utterances were the Messenger of God's own making: *The Philosophy of the Kalam* has this statement: 'Some say that what Gabriel (‘a) brought down to the Prophet (s) was only the meaning, (*al-ma'na*) and the Prophet (s) clothed the meaning with expressions of his own'. This, as will be recalled, is what we have found to be the view of Ibn Kullab, as well as of Wasiyyah and Nasafi and Taftazani. Others say 'he who

clothed the meaning is Gabriel (‘a).' This, as we have seen, is the view of Kullabite and Ash'arites."[1]

This probability has its own flaws too, because Muslims are unanimous in their belief that the Qur'an, revealed from God, the Most Exalted, consists of both meanings and utterances. Meanings alone do not make the Qur'an. The Qur'an consists of meanings put within special words and utterances. In the early days of Islam, the community of Muslims maintained this same belief. The Messenger of God (s) claimed that this same Qur'an – consisting of words, utterances and special meanings – had been revealed to him.

Objection Three

Part A*:* The other probability is: by the revealed Qur'an it means utterances, words and their meanings, but not those that were uttered through the application of the tongue; rather, the utterances and words of the speech of the soul (*nafsani*). Whoever is familiar with the spoken words recognizes their existence in his soul, *nafs* and uses them when he speaks. We call these "speech of the soul"; these of course are acquired from listening to others or reading something.

By interacting with people, the Prophets (‘a) become familiar with these words and expressions and perceive that they are there existentially. This familiarity is language dependent - the language each Prophet (‘a)

1. Wolfson, Harry Austryn, *The Philosophy of the Kalam*, p. 190, Harvard University Press, l976.

speaks - and through it he communicates with others. Listening and reading, however, are not the only means of acquiring it. Speech of the soul may be acquired through other means, too.

Part B*:* As for the Revelation, it might be said that through an intermediary or without it, God, the Most Exalted, has revealed to the Prophet (s) the Qur'anic letters, words and expressions; the Prophet (s) has heard them with the ear of his soul and has become familiar with their exalted meanings. This is the "the speech of the soul" - the sources of the utterances of the Prophet (s). Although they arbitrarily signify certain meanings, they are the creative truths - created in the heart of the Prophet by means of the Revelation - and are sources for the Messenger of God's utterances.

In conclusion, we can say that the Qur'anic words and meanings have been inspired by God, the Mighty and Magnificent, into the blessed heart of the Prophet (s). Also, God Himself has made the Qur'an into Arabic, as this verse indicates:

Surely We have made it an Arabic Qur'an that you may understand. (43:3)

Because the utterances (*alfaz*) and words of the Qur'an are produced by God, the Almighty, there is no problem concerning the miraculousness, *I'djaz,* of the Qur'an. This is what the religious community believes. *And God knows best.*

The Book

In Arabic, the term *kitab*, an equivalent of "book", means "written down", *maktub*, a collection containing lines, meaningful words, and orthographic imprints, that one or more persons have devised to denote particular senses. When read, these imprints make the writer's purport understood through an association of ideas. This is what "book" conventionally means: lines and imprints on sheets of paper so infused with meanings that the reader takes them to be one single entity.

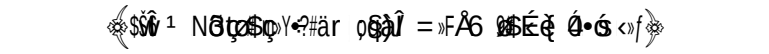
Raghib writes: "People customarily take the term "book" to mean a linear link of alphabets in written form, and sometimes to mean the sound particles linked by pronunciation. The basic principle in writing form is that order should govern the lines. The terms "*kalam*, speech" and "book" are sometimes interchangeably used. This is why God's word is called the Book (Scripture), even if it is unwritten"[1]

The divine Prophets (ʿa) recorded the Revelation they received on tablets so as to preserve them for their followers. These writings were called the Divine Book. The number of the Prophets (ʿa) who were given the Book is not clearly known, nor is the number of the divine Books, but the holy Prophet of Islam (s) has said, "One hundred and four books have come from God to the Prophets (ʿa): fifty books to Prophet Seth (ʿa); thirty books to Prophet Edris (ʿa); twenty books to Prophet Abraham (ʿa); the Torah to Prophet Moses (ʿa); the Ingil

1. *Al-Mufradat fi Gharib al-Qur'an.*

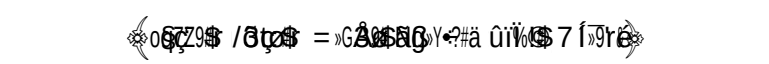
to Prophet Isa (‘a); The Psalms to Prophet David (‘a), and the Qur'an."[1]

This tradition tells that there were 104 divine Books sent to seven Prophets. But some Qur'anic verses refer to other Prophets who had Books as well, such as Prophet Yahya (‘a):



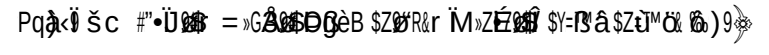
O Yahya! Take hold of the Book with strength, and We granted him wisdom while yet a child. (19:12)

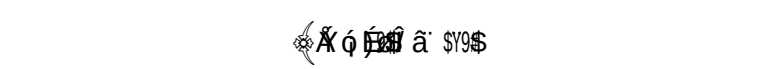
In another verse, after it mentions Prophet Ibrahim (‘a), the Qur'an names some other Prophets: Ishaq, Yaqoob, Dawood, Sulaiman, Ayub, Moses, Haroon, Zakariya, Yahya, Isa, Ilyas, Ismail, Al-Yasha, Yunus and Luth (peace be upon them all), and says:



These are they to whom We gave the book and wisdom and the prophecy. (6:89)

This verse indicates that all Messengers had been given the Book. Elsewhere we read:





1. *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 11, p. 32.

Certainly We sent Our apostles with clear arguments, and sent down with them the Book and the balance that men may conduct themselves with equity. (57:25)

The holy Qur'an, one of the divine Books, was gradually revealed to Prophet Muhammad (s) within twenty three years. On his order, the totality of its verses were written down and recorded on tablets; then all the Qur'anic verses were collected from various sheets, and compiled in a book form which was called the Qur'an.

The Revelation of the Qur'an

In various verses, exemplified below, the Glorious Qur'an introduces itself as the Book:

﴿ ` Š Ê F Ü “ ¥ ì ¡ = ‘ ¨ » G Å 6 7 ° E ﴾

This Book, there is no doubt in it, is a guide to those who guard (against evil). (2:2)

﴿ Ü Ï ± 5 > $ G Å 2 r È # ä ç M » ƒ # ä 7 ﴾

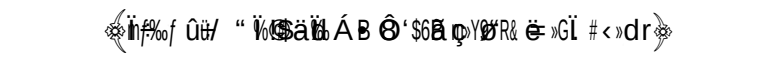
These are the verses of the Quran and the Book that makes (things) clear. (27:1)

In many verses, references have been made to the revelation of the Qur'an by such terms as *nuzul* (descent), *inzal* (sending down), and *tanzil*. These were previously discussed:

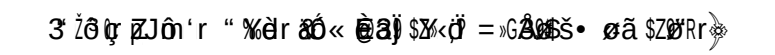
﴿ È s = » G Å 7 Ø) $ Z Ø ¥ R & $ R ﴾

Surely We have revealed the Book to you with the truth. (4:105)

This is because Allah has revealed the Book with the truth. (2:176)



And this is a Book We have revealed, blessed, verifying that which is before it. (6:92)



And We have revealed the Book to you explaining clearly everything, and a guidance and mercy and good news for those who submit. (16:89)

From these verses, it is understood that like the Qur'an, "the Book" has also been revealed.

Now, a question: What is "the Book" and how was it revealed? Customarily, the term "book" means a group of particular lines and imprints on tablets and pages, conveying particular meanings arbitrarily decided. The Glorious Qur'an is likewise called the Book. The holy Prophet (s) recited the revealed verses to the scribes, who, according to the Messenger of God's direction, used to write them down on tablets that the Prophet (s) kept with him to be preserved for people. After the Prophet's (s) demise, the companions collected them in a book - this particular Book that is now at the disposal of Muslims.

The Book/Qur'an was, therefore, written out by the scribes of the Revelation, but these days it is printed by the

publishers. It makes no sense to claim that the book - when it is taken in the latter sense - has come down the supreme plane because there was no such "collected" book for Gabriel (‘a) to bring to the Prophet (s) piece by piece, or, all at once.

The next probability is to say: the "Book" means the verbal utterances of the Messenger of God, that is, the sounds and letters that he uttered in Arabic made impressions on the surrounding air, and reached the ears of the scribes of the Revelation. Mulla Sadra has said, "We can say that the *kalam*/speech and 'the Book' are essentially one single truth, but arbitrarily different. Words and utterances have two kinds of relationship: one with the agent, *fa'il* and the place of issue, *masdar*, the other with the one who receives, *qabil*, and makes it known, *muzhir*. In the former case, they are called *kalam* and in the latter one they are called the book."[1]

One might refute the above, too, by saying that it opposes the dictionary meaning because philologically "the book" means a combination of prints and lines, not verbal utterances. Even if the verbal utterances are assumed to mean "the book", the problem will still remain unsolved because the Messenger of God's (s) utterances are his own act and product, and could not have come down from a superior plane of existence.

The next probability is to take "the book" as denoting the same lines and prints that were written down at the time of

1. *Al-Asfar al-'Arba'ah*, Section two of the 3rd "Journey", pages 10-1.

the Messenger of God (s) on scattered tablets in the customary calligraphic style. These were later on written on sheets of paper, and in different manners, and are these days printed in multitudes of copies which are available to Muslims.

When mention is made of "*nuzul*/revelation of the Book, it might mean that the source of the Book – *kalam nafsi* – consisting of speech and utterances of the soul - was revealed to the blessed heart of the Messenger of God (s). One might also say that because the codified book is the product of man's effort, in reality it cannot have been revealed from God, the Most Exalted. We must therefore say that it was really the source of the Book that had been revealed to the Prophet's heart. Based on this consideration, the codified book is given "*nuzul*/descent" and is called "God's Book", and "God's Word.

Whether the author himself writes the book or communicates the ideas and someone else writes them down, the book itself is ascribed to the author, because it is he who is the actual source of the book. Such is the case with the Book of God, the Mighty and Magnificent. Because the words and phrases have come from God to the blessed heart of the Messenger of God (s) - and to this the apparent prints and lines signify – it is called *Kalam Allah*, God's word, and *Kitab Allah*, God's Book.

POSSIBILITY OF THE REVELATION AS VIEWED BY ISLAMIC PHILOSOPHY

Certain philosophers have doubted and even denied the possibility of the Revelation. They have said: even if we accept the existence of God as a Being transcending the world of nature, He does not have substantial and horizontal continuity with man and with the world of nature. Man is a natural and finite being; God is infinite, beyond the bounds of nature, and incorporeal; the world of nature is limited and finite. How can we conceive of the man, a particle of the world of nature, to surpass his boundary and be in communion with the incorporeal world?

Answer*:* Philosophy has proved that man is not a purely corporeal being, but is a truth made up of a material body and incorporeal angelic spirit. Bodily, he is a part of the world of nature; spiritually, he is related with the World of the Unseen and is of the same type. Therefore, the Prophet (s), who is the Perfect Man (the Universal Man; *insane-i kamil*) is in communion with the World of the Unseen through his angelic incorporeal spirit, and receives the divine emanations. In other words, the world of nature is not limited and closed, but is related with the World of the Unseen by the medium of the Perfect Man and his sacred spirit.

The Islamic philosophers have a lot to say in support of the possibility of the Revelation, in explaining it, and of man's capability to attain the abovementioned exalted rank. Some of these ideas are as follows:

Man's heart resembles a mirror, which is a smooth, polished surface with the natural quality of reflecting the light and images of the objects that are placed in front of it, provided that A. It is unblemished and not opaque;

B. There is no obstacle between the mirror and the object;

C. The object is put in front of the mirror;

D. The environment is not dark;

E. The mirror and the object are not at great distances from each other.

Scholars have likened man's heart and spirit to a polished and lucid mirror, and hold that naturally it should reflect knowledge of the Unseen. If it cannot, it might be because of the following reasons:

1. One has not attained the stage of perfection, as a child who has not yet attained the age of maturity.

2. One's heart has become dark because he has turned away from God's commands, and has sinned.

3. Due to lustful indulgence in and preoccupation with secular matters, one's heart has changed direction from the treasury of the Unseen knowledge, and has thus deviated.

4. False beliefs and blind imitations have prevented one from comprehending the truths.

5. One's mode of thinking is in opposition with the correct logical order of preliminary – conclusion steps.

Such obstacles deprive one's heart from its natural efficacy. When there is no obstacle, the heart will acquire the natural efficacy, that is, it will comprehend the sciences and true knowledge.

Sadr al-Muta'allihin writes: "As far as man's three basic faculties of reasoning, (intellect), *aql*, imagination, and sensation are concerned, man has within him three cosmoses. Intensity of the faculty of intellect, having attained perfection, connects man to the Sacred world and to those proximate to God, *mugharrebin*.

Intensity of the faculty of imagination is a cause enabling man to see phantasmal (*mithali*) apparitions and invisible persons, receive detailed news concerning them, and become aware of the past and future events.

Intensity of the faculty of sense is a cause for the external elements and forces of the body to be humble and subordinated to him. Thus, the Perfect man in whom the above mentioned cosmoses exist together is the one in whom the threefold faculties are operative to the highest degree. He is, therefore, worthy for the exalted rank of being God's *khalifa*. Such a person has three particularities:

Perfection of the theoretical faculty or the intellect; this means such a person's soul, *nafs*, attains spiritual purity and lucidity and resembles the Active Intellect to which he then gets related without much meditation, and is gifted with human knowledge and learning without previous human instruction. His rational soul, *nasf-i natiqa*, will be

illuminated by the light from God, the Most Exalted, and his intellect will be illuminated by the light from Active Intelligence which is not exterior to him, even if there is no human instruction at work.

Educationally, there are two classes of people: one is in need of teaching, but the other one is not. Those in the former group are likewise divided into those who do not acquire knowledge in spite of proper instructions, however hard they try; but those in the latter group do, and they learn quickly. One might learn better than another person because of his intense sharp mind. In one group their mental brightness is diminished; these people are so dumb that even the Prophets (ʿa) are unable to guide them. God, the Most Exalted, has said to Prophet Muhammad (s): "*You cannot guide whomever thou pleaseth* (28:56)," in another group certain others may attain a state of such intensity of brightness and purity of the soul that they acquire, within a short period of time, abundant human learning and sciences in a way that no other person can. This is a kind of miracle. Such people exist although they may be small in number. A person in this denomination is called *nabi*, the Prophet, or *wali*, (the Guardian).

Perfection of the faculty of Imagination In people with such degree of ability, the faculty of imagination is so strong that while they are awake they see the Unseen World, partially observe beautiful faces and hear versed beautiful sounds in some esoteric realms, or report what the spirit has seen in the worlds of intellect, particularly in that world of intellect whence perfections are emanated to mankind. Then, while they are in a waking state, these

people observe things and hear sounds that come to them in sleep.

The person who is in this category gives an account of the visage of the "noble substance" which is surprising when conceived of in the sensory world; and it is the angel that the Prophet (s) and his *wali* see. The knowledge that comes to him through his tie with the "noble substance of Intellects" – appearing as rhymed language – is of utmost eloquence and beauty, and this is also possible."[1]

Shahrestani has quoted Shaykh al-Ra'-is Avicenna to have said, "As regards 'their detachment from the material world and turning to the Unseen World', Prophets are at the zenith of human hierarchy because a prophet has in himself the three characteristics which we mention in the field of natural sciences. Through these characteristics they hear God's word, and see the proximate angels, transformed though. Just as the existents begin with the Most Noble, *al-ashraf*, and progress to arrive at the First Intellect, and in the descending they descend to the lowest existents – matter. The soul, too, begins from the lowest stages to arrive at the rational soul, *nafs-i natiqa*, then moves up to the rank of *nubuwwah*, Prophethood."[2]

Revelation in Viewpoint of Islamic Philosophers

Islamic Philosophers have expressed meticulous ideas concerning the Revelation, its nature and manner. These

1. *Al-Mabda' wa al-Ma'ad*, pp. 280-282; *al-Shawahid al-Rububiyeh*, pp. 340-342.
2. *Milal wa Nihal*, vol. 3, p. 44.

can be useful in recognizing the Revelation. Some of these are as follows:

Sadr al-Muta'allihin writes: "After one has purified his soul by removing from it the opaqueness of sins, pleasure-seeking, sensuality, satanic whisperings and secular attachments, and has given up interest in the body and has migrated towards God, the Almighty, to observe His "*greater signs*", then the light of true knowledge, *ma'rifa*, and belief in God and in the world of the Unseen will illuminate his entire heart. The terrestrial and celestial secrets, as well as the truth of things as they are, will be revealed to him in the same way that visible objects become apparent to the faculty of vision through the medium of light. All this takes place because man's heart/ soul has the propensity to receive the light of wisdom according to the disposition God, the Most Exalted, has given it, provided that it is not made polluted by the darkness which is an outcome of disbelief or by the veil resulting from disobedience to God, as the Glorious Qur'an says,

﴿šc qßϑÏ wöθu ùÍqè4?ã ìÎêr﴾

And a seal is set on their hearts so they do not understand. (9:87)

Thus, when one purges his soul from the darkness of nature and gust of desires, idle whims and preoccupation with lusts, anger, and material things and turns, instead, to the Most Sacred God, as well as to the angelic realm, he will attain a supreme rank and great felicity: empyrean mysteries will be unveiled before his eyes, and he will

behold the wonderful signs of the divine, as the holy Qur'an says,

﴿# ž¤ŠÏ‹Ï? ÏM»ƒ#ä ôÐ 3" &‘ ¶)9﴾

Certainly he saw of the greatest signs of his Lord. (53:18)

If, due to the intense connection it has had with the world of the Unseen, this soul is sacred and mighty and serves as a common boundary between the material phenomenal world and the angelic realm, the concern man shows for the material phenomenal world will not prevent him from paying attention to the intelligible world, and vice versa – such are the Prophets. While he is reflecting upon the World of the Unseen, knowledge from the Divine emanates into his illuminated heart and from it to his other faculties. What he beholds with his sacred spirit will become apparent to his human spirit too. From the heart it moves on to the faculty of imagination; from the faculty of imagination it moves to the common sense and from the common sense it becomes apparent to the faculties of hearing and sight. At this stage, he observes the Angel of Revelation in its full beauty, and hears his word as well as the Message of God, the Most Exalted – all in an instant, actualized above and beyond time and place. It should be added that the visages and voices are real, not vain and imaginative."[1]

In the explanatory notes and glosses he has written on the book *Asfar*, Hakim Sabzewari - may his spirit be

1. *Al-Asfar al-Arba'a*, (The four-fold jounry) part two of the third journey, pp. 24-25; *Mafatih al-Ghaib*. p. 33.

sanctified - writes, "In the process of vision, the visible object appears on the sensitive sensor in the body, *hassah,* and the soul in fact sees it – be it an outer form made out by the senses, or an inner one made out by the heart, and by virtue of the direct effusion from the Divine. This is because the inner faculties are similar to mirrors that reflect the forms each contains. When a form appears in the soul, it moves on to the common sense, which is like a double-sided mirror: on one side it reflects, by means of senses, the exterior sensory objects, and on the other, it faces the heart to which knowledge and sciences have been emanated."[1]

Elsewhere Sadr al-Muta'allihin writes: "Man's dialogue with God, the Most Exalted, and receiving knowledge from Him, is the most supreme type of discourse during which the Prophet listens with the inner ear of his heart to the Intellectual Word, *kalam-i aqli,* and the sacred locution coming from God, the Glorified. By God's word it means: effusion of true knowledge to the illuminated heart of the Prophet (s)"[2]

Elsewhere, this theosopher writes: "By God's talk with the Prophet it means the effusion of truths and inspiration of knowledge onto his illuminated heart. By the Prophet's discourse with God, the Most Exalted, it means an inherent request for divine grace, made through the language of request. By listening to the Revelation it

1. Ibid, page 25.
2. Ibid, p. 7.

means: hearing the Intellectual Word through the instrumentality of the ear of the heart"[1]

Avicenna writes, "Upon observing an aspect of the angelic realm, one's soul gets separated from the faculty of imagination. Right then, universal meanings are given it by the Active Intellect without differentiations and arrangements. From the soul they are emanated to the faculty of imagination. It is here that the faculty of imagination comprehends them in audible phrases, detailed and arranged. Most probably, the process of Revelation must be the same, because in order to communicate the Revelation to the blessed soul of the Prophet in detailed audible words, the Active Intellect has no need for the faculty of imagination."[2]

Shahrestani has quoted Shaikh al-Rais's comment on the knowledge of the World of the Unseen as follows: "Certain souls become so mighty that they are not distracted by sense impressions. They have the ability to think about the intelligible world and the world of senses as well. Such souls have a view of the world of the Unseen. It is at this moment that certain matters become known to them with lightning speed; what they have perceived will be firmly lodged in their mind, and this is called unambiguous revelation"[3]

As regards the miracles and wonders, Shahrestani has again quoted Shaikh al-Rais to have said, "Sometimes,

1. *Mafatih al-Ghayb*, p. 19.
2. *Kitab Ta'liqat*, p. 82 as quoted from *Dah Risalih Farsi*, p. 151.
3. *Al-Milal wa al-Nihal*, vol. 3, p. 73.

certain souls becomes so mighty that in the waking state they make contacts with the world of the Unseen. At this time, their power of imagination gives a report, in beautiful form and in arranged sounds, of what their soul has perceived. Thus, they behold those forms and hear those sounds while they are awake. Thus, the form that gives a report of the Noble Substance is wonderful, and of utmost beauty; it is the angel that the Prophet (s) beholds. The knowledge that has been acquired through connection of the soul with the Noble Substance will appear to his common sense in a beautiful form, arranged and rhymed, and will be heard."[1]

As regards the Revelation, Ibn Khaldun says, "Certain human beings are created in a manner that they are able to detach themselves from traces of humanity altogether, join the angels at *"the highest part of horizon"*, have a vision of "*Mala' 'Ala* and listen to the Divine address.

These sacred essences are the prophets. God, the Most Exalted, has endowed them with the ability to cast off humanity in that moment which is the state of revelation. Although they are human beings, they are free from sensual pollutions. Because of straightforwardness and sustained balance of instincts they are able to maintain their angelic aspect.

Their love for worship and their devotion to God, the Almighty, draws them towards Allah. Whenever the Prophet wills, he sloughs off his humanity and moves

1. Ibid, vol. 3, p. 74.

toward the angelic horizon. Once there, he receives knowledge and teachings from "*the highest part of the horizon*", brings them down to the faculties of human perception as this is the way in which these can be transmitted to human beings. At times, this may happen in the form of a noise - like that of a honey bee - and the prophet hears it; this might symbolize the speech. He understands the message and retains it. At other times, the angel of Revelation appears to the Prophet as a handsome man who talks to him. Receiving the message from the angel, reverting to the level of human perception, and understanding the message conveyed to him – all this appears to take place in one moment, or rather, in a flash. It does not take place in time, but everything happens simultaneously. That is why it is called *wahy*, the Revelation, because the term revelation denotes a component of speed."[1]

Summary of the Chapter

In order to explain Revelation and Prophecy, Islamic philosophers have had the following premises in mind:

1. The Prophet (s) is a Perfect person whose "soul" and "intellect" have achieved the topmost rank in the scale of humanity.

2. The Prophet's (s) soul is absolutely free from opacities resulting from sin and worldly attachments, is polished,

1. *Muqaddimeh* of Ibn Khaldun, Translated by Franz Rosenthal, l967, pp. 77-78 (slightly altered by the present translator to match the Persian text).

lucid and prepared to receive knowledge and teachings from the Lord of the world.

3. The Prophet's (s) sacred soul is so illuminated and mighty that can within a short period slough off his plane of humanity, ascend to the horizon of the angels that are nearest to God, the Almighty, and to the World of the Unseen, and thus be exposed to that illuminating world of sciences and knowledge.

4. In view of the intensity of connection it has with the World of the Unseen, the Prophet's (s) sacred soul resides on the boundary common between the material phenomenal world and that of the angels, and can simultaneously possess qualities of both.

5. Like his faculty of intellect, the Prophet's (s) *sensus communis* and his faculty of imagination rank the highest in the order of man's faculties, and retains the knowledge that comes to his heart and manifested at the levels of his *sensus communis* and imagination. It is at this stage that he sees the angel of revelation and hears him.

6. Concerning cosmogony and the management of the universe, Islamic sages believe in the existence of Ten Intellects which they hold are horizontally leveled. They consider the Tenth Intellect, *intellectus inact*, the intermediary for the effusion of perfection to the material world, and a direct agent for it to attain perfection, and hold the view that God's graces emanate to the material world through the instrumentality of the Ten Intellects. Of these it is the Tenth Intellect which is the agent for the effusions. Some of these emanations include various elements of knowledge, *ulum*, coming, to the souls of

men. This is why they consider the Active Intellect as the source of the Prophet's (s) knowledge, and at times identify it with Gabriel (ʿa), whose name is mentioned in books of tradition and history.

Given the above, Islamic philosophers have commented on the manner of the communication of the Revelation as follows: The Prophet's mighty, pure and polished soul turns to the transcendent with the station, *maqam*, that is closest to the World of the Unseen (the Active Intelligence = Gabriel) Without resorting to his mental power and drawing an analogy, all knowledge that concern the rank of prophethood emanate into the Prophet's (s) pure heart and the sacred soul. Then it is transferred to his *sensus communis* and the faculty of imagination. It is here that he sees the Angel of Revelation, and hears his words which are Almighty God's. Below are some points to consider:

1. Although Islamic sages have introduced the Active Intellect as the source of the Prophetic sciences, this does not mean that the nature of the Revelation can ever be marred if the existence of the Ten Intellects is counted against him, because the Prophet (s) establishes a link with the world of the Unseen at the time the Revelation is being communicated to him, and receives the Prophetic sciences from the ranks closest to God in that world, be it Gabriel or the Active Intelligence.

2. The words of the Islamic sages, who consider the Active Intelligence as the source of the revelatory sciences, should not be taken to mean that the Prophets' knowledge is of the same type as the learning the scientists acquire, because these Islamic sages have made it clear that the knowledge coming to the soul of the Prophets (s)

through the Revelation is not obtained through meditation and analogy, but it is directly emanated into their pure hearts, and this differs from the knowledge of ordinary men of learning which is formed through meditation and analogy.

3. Like theologians, *mutekallemin,* the Islamic sages, hold that Prophecy is a divine gift; it is not acquired. The Creator of the world has gifted the Prophets with the capacity to receive the occult sciences, to understand the Revelation, to see the angel of Revelation, and to hear his words. Other men are denied these grand divine gifts.

Revelation As Allamah Iqbal Sees it

From the viewpoint of Muhammad Iqbal, Revelation is an internal feeling and an experience in which God, the Most Exalted, unveils Himself to the person who experiences it. This experience is achieved through the heart. Iqbal writes: "The heart is a kind of inner intuition, *Ishraq*, or an insight which, in the beautiful words of Rumi, feeds on the rays of the sun and brings us into contact with aspects of Reality other than those open to sense-perception. It is, according to the Qur'an, something which 'sees', and its reports, if properly interpreted, are never false. We must not, however, regard it as a mysterious special faculty; it is rather a mode of dealing with Reality in which sensation, in the physiological sense of the word, does not play any part. Yet the vista of experience thus opened to us is as real and concrete as any other experience. To describe it as

psychic, mystical, or supernatural does not detract from its value as experience."[1]

Iqbal names three sources for human knowledge and learning:

1. Internal experience;

2. External feelings and experiences;

3. Historical experiences.

He writes, "Internal experience is but only one source of human knowledge. Based on the Qur'an, there are two others: history and the world of nature."[2] Elsewhere, he writes "God reveals His tokens both in the internal and external experiences."[3]

As for the internal experiences, he writes "The revealed and mystic literature of mankind bears ample testimony to the fact that religious experience has been too enduring and dominant in the history of mankind to be rejected as mere illusion. There seems to be no reason, then, to accept the normal level of human experience as fact and reject its other levels as mystical and emotion. The facts of religious experience are facts among other facts of human experience, and in the capacity of yielding knowledge by interpretation, one fact is as good as another."[4]

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1. Allama Muhammad Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, p. 13.
2. Ibid, page 147.
3. Ibid, page 146.
4. Ibid, page 13.

Also, "For the purpose of knowledge, then, the region of mystic experience is as real as any other region of human experience and cannot be ignored merely because it cannot be traced back to sense-perception."[1]

As a further explanation concerning the Revelation and religious experiences, Iqbal, refers to some particularities, and writes:

1. "All experience is immediate. As regions of normal experience are subject to interpretation of sense-data for our knowledge of the external world, so the region of mystic experience is subject to interpretation of our knowledge of God. The immediacy of mystic experience simply means that we know God just as we know other objects. God is not a mathematical entity or a system of concepts mutually related to one another having no reference."[2]

2. "The second point is the unanalysable wholeness of mystic experience. When I experience the table before me, innumerable data of experience merge into the single experience of the table. Out of this wealth of data I select those that fall into a certain order of space and time and round them off in reference to the table. In the mystic state, however, vivid and rich it may be, thought is reduced to a minimum and such an analysis is not possible."[3]

1. Ibid, page 18.
2. Ibid, p. 14.
3. Ibid, p. 15.

3. "The third point to note is that to the mystic the mystic state is a moment of intimate association with a Unique Other Self, transcending, encompassing, and momentarily suppressing the private personality of the subject of experience. Considering its content the mystic state is highly objective and cannot be regarded as a mere retirement into the mists of pure subjectivity."[1]

4. "Since the quality of mystic experience is to be directly experienced, it is obvious that it cannot be communicated. Mystic states are more like feeling than thought. The interpretation which the mystic or the prophet puts on the content of religious consciousness can be conveyed to others in the form of propositions, but the content itself cannot be so transmitted. Thus in the following verses of the Qur'an it is the psychology and not the content of the experience that is given."[2]

ÖÅÉÇ‘r `Ï$<ônr ÈÎ$ÇJ3ÃbÆ;Ï b. $Br

ÒÅ6 m ;íã ¼ÇÎ â±„$B ¾ÏÎÎ ÓÇqÃÈqÎ‘

And it is not for any mortal that Allah should speak to him except by revelation or from behind a veil, or by sending a messenger and revealing by His permission what He please; surely He is High, Wise. (42:51)

1. Ibid, p. 15.
2. Ibid, p. 16.

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I swear by the star when it goes down. Your companion does not err, nor does he go astray; nor does he speak out of desire. It is naught but revelation that is revealed. The Lord of Mighty Power has taught him, the Lord of Strength; so he attained completion, and he is in the highest part of the horizon. Then he drew near, then he bowed, so he was the measure of two bows or closer still. And He revealed to His servant what He revealed. The heart was not untrue in (making him see) what he saw. What! Do you then dispute with him as to what he saw? And certainly he saw Him in another descent, at the farthest lote-tree; near which is the garden, the place to be resorted to. When that which covers covered the lote-tree, the eye did not turn aside, nor did it exceed the limit. Certainly he saw of the greatest signs of his Lord. (53:1-18)

"The incommunicability of mystic experience is due to the fact that it is essentially a matter of inarticulate feeling, untouched by discursive intellect."[1]

5. "The mystic's intimate association with the eternal which gives him a sense of the unreality of serial time does not mean a complete break with serial time. The mystic state in respect of its uniqueness remains in some way related to common experience. This is clear from the fact that the mystic state soon fades away, though it leaves a deep sense of authority after it has passed away. Both the mystic and the prophet return to the normal levels of experience, but with this difference that the return of the prophet, as I will show later, may be fraught with infinite meaning for mankind."[2]

It is thus understood that the Revelation is a kind of feeling, an internal experience and a link between man and God, the Most Exalted. It is simple *basit*, and cannot be transferred to others as it is. It is not of the same type as thoughts, and words are incapable of holding its reality. It is indeed a kind of presence and a heart-felt observation which has, within it, a perceptual element that can take on a hue of thoughts then and be clad in words to be conveyed to others.

With regard to the above, Iqbal writes: "Mystic feeling, like all feeling, has a cognitive element also; and it is, I believe, because of this cognitive element that it lends itself to the form of idea. In fact, it is the nature of feeling

1. *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, p. 17.
2. Ibid, p. 18.

to seek expression in thought. It would seem that the two – feeling and idea – are the non-temporal aspects of the same unit of inner experience."[1]

Elsewhere he writes, "The organic relation of feeling and idea throws light on the old theological controversy about verbal revelation which once gave so much trouble to Mulism religious thinkers. If articulate feeling seeks to fulfill its destiny in idea which, in turn, tends to develop out of itself its own visible garment. It is no mere metaphor to say that idea and word both simultaneously emerge out of the womb of feeling, though logical understanding cannot but take them in a temporal order and thus create its own difficulty by regarding them as mutually isolated. There is a sense in which the word is also revealed."[2]

1. Ibid, p. 17.
2. Ibid, p. 19.

REVELATION IN QUR'ANIC PERSPECTIVE

Although the holy Qur'an describes Revelation as a truth, and ascribes the Revelation to the Prophets, it gives but cursory explanations with regard to the manner of its communication.

The holy Qur'an says:

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«ûüÍÉZ0¢S`B bqãG¶

And most surely this is a revelation from the Lord of the world. The Faithful Spirit has descended with it upon your heart that you may be of the warners. (26:192-4)

$]¶ÁÃ‹ $È©Îî 7 Îe¼ 4?ã ¼ç9“R ¼çPÎù ¶ƒÎ©É¶ #x¾ã šc ¼. `B @e»

«ûüÏBs0¶ 2” ŽÕçr “ %èr ïƒ‰ƒ šú ¨/ $J¶

Say: Who is the enemy of Jibreel – for surely he revealed it to your heart by Allah's command, verifying that which is before it, and guidance and good news for the believers. (2:97)

These two verses point to an important particularity of the Revelation – the direct revelation made to the heart of the

Prophet: "Gabriel has directly revealed it (the Qur'an) to your heart."

It is evident that such instructions differ from the customary teaching and learning process. Man's acquired sciences come to him through the five senses. First, he makes a contact with the outside world through his senses, the product of which enters his *sensus communis*. Then, his faculty of imagination perceives the forms, and his faculty of comprehension the detailed meanings; these are then stored in his memory. Next, using reason and deduction, *qiyas*, his rational faculty acquires the knowledge, which finally enters his heart and soul.

The holy Qur'an specifies that the communication of the Revelation follows a different course: knowledge of the truth first enters the Prophet's heart directly and then descends to other faculties through the heart.

Allamah Tabatabai'i's interpretation of the above Qur'anic verse is as follows: "The term "*heart*" means man's soul, *nafs*, which is a locus for the perception of sciences. The Qur'anic verse states:

﴿ 7îŸ 4?ã ÇÌÈ ÇüÏÈ ÇüÏÈ ÇüÏÈ A“Ρ﴾

The Faithful Spirit has descended with it upon your heart. (26:193-4)

It does not say *upon thee*. Therefore, it may be a hint on how the Qur'an was received by the Prophet (s): the Revelation was directly communicated to the Prophet's (s) heart without the mediation of the senses. The Prophet (s) often saw the angel and heard the Revelation without making use of his faculties of hearing and sight. If the

vision of the angel and the hearing of the Revelation had taken place through the corporeal eye, those present at the time of the Revelation should have seen Gabriel (‘a) and heard his voice, but no one did."[1]

Ruh al-Bayan, a commentary of the Qur'an has quoted the following from the books *Kashf al-Asrar*: "Whenever the Revelation came to Prophet Muhammad (s), it came onto his blessed heart, because he was greatly attached to and immersed in the World of the Unseen whole-heartedly. From his heart, it then moved to his faculty of understanding and then to his ear. This is the descending order, a particularity of most special people, whereas, the common people hear first through their ears and the learning then enters their faculty of understanding and finally their heart. The followers of the Path, *Ahli Suluk*, acquire knowledge in this latter way - from a lower level to a higher one. What a difference between these two!"[2]

The Revelation is thus extraordinary knowledge coming through an extraordinary way. In effusion it does not resemble customary teachings, and it is not understood through meditation and deduction, *qiyas*, as other instructions are. Rather, the Revelation is the direct effusion and reflection of the knowledge of the truth onto the illuminated heart of the Prophet (s). Receiving of the Revelation is also a kind of inner consciousness which is different from the usual.

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1. *Al-Mizan*, Commentary of the Qur'an, vol. 15, p. 345.
2. *Ruh al-Bayan*, vol. 6, p. 306.

Allamah Tabataba'i, may his soul be sanctified, has said, "Psychologists have no doubts that man has some kind of essential and inner consciousness that sometimes becomes apparent in certain people. When it does, the person will have the door of the World of Unseen opened before him. In this state, knowledge and learning which are superior to intellectual sciences and thoughts unveil before him. A group of European psychologists, such as James, the Briton, have clearly emphasized the existence of such consciousness. The Revelation is, therefore, something other than intellectual thought."[1]

Elsewhere, he writes, "No doubt, the Revelation is an extraordinary matter, a type of inner perception to which our senses have no way; the intellect however does not consider this extraordinary matter impossible."[2]

One more particularity of the Revelation pointed to by the Qur'an is that the Prophet (s) sees the angel with his heart. The Holy Qur'an says:

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful. I swear by the star when it goes down. Your companion does not error, not does he go astray; nor does he speak out of desire. It is naught but revelation that is revealed. The Lord of Mighty Power has taught him, the Lord of Strength; so he attained completion, and he is in the highest part of the horizon. Then he drew near, then he bowed. So he was the measure of two bows or closer still. And He revealed to His servant what He revealed. The

1. *Al-Mizan*, vol. 15, p. 159.
2. Ibid, p. 160.

heart was not untrue in making him see what he saw. What! Do you then dispute with him as to what he saw? And certainly he saw Him in another descent, at the farthest lot-tree; near which is the garden, the place to be resorted to. When that which covers covered the lote-tree; the eye did not turn aside, nor did it exceed the limit. Certainly he saw the greatest signs of His Lord. (53:1-18)

As is seen in the verse:" *The heart was not untrue in (making him see) what he saw*," the heart has been qualified as seeing – that is, it can have a vision of Gabriel (ʿa). The statements :"*what he saw*" and "*And certainly he saw Him in another descent*," convey the same sense - seeing with the heart - in the same way that "*the eye*" in the phrase "*the eye did not turn aside*," has the same meaning: the eye of the heart.

As an explanation of the above verse, Allamah Tabataba'i writes, "By the statement: *'The heart was not untrue in (making him see) what he saw*' it means that what the Prophet (s) saw with his own heart was not untrue. To ascribe the heart with the quality "to see" is not unfamiliar to us. Besides perceiving through their external senses and in addition to meditating and imagining through their inner faculties, men possess a kind of intuitive perception not achieved through the external senses and internal faculties. Within ourselves, we perceive something, smell something and touch something, and observe our own imagination and thought, too, while we know that our external senses and internal faculties have no role in such perceptions. We are able to comprehend the forms that these faculties have perceived. We perceive the act of the perception in the same manner. It is not "the faculties" that perceive, but the

soul that does so, and in the above verse it is referred to "the heart".

Revelations As Referred to in Traditions

With the exception of a few hints – mentioned below – unfortunately, we do not have *ahadith* that clearly explain the manner and nature of the Revelation:

A. "Harith b. Hesham asked the Messenger of God (s), 'How does the Revelation come to you?' He said, "Sometimes it begins with a sound which is much like the reverberation of a bell, and this is the most intense type of Revelation. When it ends, I remember all that has been said. Sometimes, the angel appears to me in the form of a man. He speaks. Then I retain what he says."[1]

B. Abdullah b. Umar says, "I asked the holy Prophet, 'Do you feel the Revelation?' He said, 'Yes; I feel a sound, like a bell. Then I remain silent. I feel like I am at the point of death."[2]

It is understood from these two Prophetic statements that, at times, the Revelation would begin with unusual sounds, such as the ringing of a bell – this was the most intense type of Revelation - and at other times it would come in the form of the angel in a concrete form, and speech. Varieties of Revelation

1. *Jami' al-Usul*, vol. 11, p.281; *Manaqib* of Ibn Shahr Ashub, vol. 1, p. 43
2. *Al-Itqan fi Ulum al-Qur'an*, vol. 1, p. 95.

The Revelation and the speech of God, the Glorified addressing the Prophet (s) have been achieved in three manners. The Qur'an says:

And it is not for any mortal that Allah should speak to him except by revelation or from behind a veil, or by sending a messenger and revealing by His permission what He pleases; surely He is High, Wise. (42:51)

The above verse mentions three types of Revelation:

Type One*:* God's soft and direct speech addressing the Prophet is referred to in the above verse by the phrase: "*except by revelation."* In type two, the phrase God's speech is restricted by "*from behind a veil,*" and in type three, "*or by sending a messenger.*" The latter differs from the first type, which being without a modifier is, therefore, quick, in a soft voice and without an intermediary. This type of the Revelation sometimes comes in the waking state, and sometimes in sleep.

It is understood from certain Traditions that the mission of a number of Prophets (‘a) came to them in this way: various knowledge and duties were directly and clearly revealed to their hearts while they were in a state of dream, and they could observe and hear certain truths being communicated. The Revelation descended in this way at the onset of their mission to gradually prepare them for the direct Revelation.

Imam Muhammad Baqir (‘a) said, "Prophets are divided into five groups: some heard the Revelation sound like the clanking of iron chains. This is how they received the meanings and content of the Revelation. To the next group – Joseph (‘a) and Ebrahim (‘a) - the Revelation came in

their sleep. The next group saw the angel of Revelation. The fourth and the fifth group are those to whom truths were inspired - either into their hearts or their ears."[1]

Zurareh asked Imam Muhammad Baqir (ʿa): "Who are the Messenger, *Rasul*, the Prophet, *Nabi*, and the *Muhadath*?" The Imam (ʿa) answered, "The Messenger is the one before whom Gabriel (ʿa) appears. The Messenger sees him and talks to him. The Prophet (ʿa) is the one to whom the Revelation is communicated in his sleep, as Prophet Ibrahim (ʿa) had a dream; and so did Prophet Muhammad (s) before being raised as the Prophet. Then by God's permission Gabriel (ʿa) brought him the Prophetic mission. After he had the two ranks of Prophecy and Messengership, Gabriel (ʿa) began to come to him from God Almighty and talk to him. To some Prophets, too, the angel would come in their sleep; the Spirit would come and talk to them, but they would not see him in their waking state.

The *Muhadath* is the one to whom a *hadith* is narrated; but this person does not see him the narrator of the hadith in the waking state or in sleep."

As for the Prophet of Islam (s), he is said to have seen in his sleep certain realities that proved to be completely true. A'isha says, "The first stage of the Prophecy of Hadrat Muhammad (s) – when God, the Most Exalted, desired to honor him and have mercy on His servants – consisted of good and true dreams. He did not have a dream of

1. *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 11, p. 53.

something except that it became clear, resembling the brightness of daybreak."[1]

Halabi writes, "For Prophet Muhammad (s), the Revelation began with dreams, so that he would be prepared to see Gabriel (ʿa) and receive it, because it is very difficult to see Gabriel (ʿa), hear his voice and endure the Revelation."[2] The Commander of the Faithful (ʿa) said that the Prophets' dream is therefore a kind of Revelation.[3]

The Prophets' dream differs from others' in that, in it they clearly see the realities corresponding to the outside occurrences. Imaginations and satanic whisperings cannot make their ways into the Prophets' existence because while they are asleep their hearts are fully agile and conscious even though their eyes and ears are asleep similar to other men.

The Messenger of God (s) said, "Slumber overcomes our eyes, but our hearts are always agile. We can see what is behind us in the same way that we see what is before us."[4]

Type Two*:* This Revelation is communicated "*from behind the veil*." In it, God, the Most Glorified, talks to the Prophet (ʿa) without the angel; the Prophet (ʿa) hears Almighty God's word, too. This type of Revelation is heard from a particular place or object, like the time when

1. *Sireh Halabiyeh*, vol. 1, page 256.
2. Ibid.
3. *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 61, p. 181.
4. Ibid, vol. 11, p. 55.

God talked to Prophet Moses (‘a) through a tree. The holy Qur'an says,

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And when he came to it, a voice was uttered from the right side of the valley in the blessed spot of the tree, saying: O Musa! Surely I am Allah, the Lord of the worlds. (28:28)

As is seen in the above verse, God, the Most Glorified, has talked through the tree. The voice has been God's, heard through the tree without the angel.

Allamah Tabataba'i, may his soul be sanctified, has written: "In this kind of Revelation, there exists a veil, but it does not utter anything; the voice is heard from *wara*, every side. A contextual example is the Qur'anic verse

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And Allah encompasses them on every side. (85:20)

Type Three*:* This Revelation is communicated through the agency of Gabriel (‘a) as is explained by the Qur'anic phrase "*or by sending a messenger,*" quoted above. In this type, Gabriel is the link between God Almighty and the Prophet (s), that is, the revelation is not without an intermediary. Gabriel would come down from God Almighty, and inspire the Prophet's blessed heart with the learning and knowledge he had brought. The Prophet (s) would hear it through the ear of his heart.

This type of Revelation took place in various forms: the Angel's voice was heard some of the time, but he was invisible. At others times, he would appear visibly. Harith asked the Prophet (s): "How does the Revelation come to you?" The Prophet answered, "At times I hear a sound, like the reverberation of a bell; it is the hardest upon me. This state being finished, I retain in my mind the things he has said. Sometimes the angel of the Revelation takes the form of a man and speaks to me. I memorize all he has said."[1]

Imam Sadiq (ʻa) said, "Whenever Gabriel came to the Prophet, he used to sit before the Prophet (s) as a servant does; he would not enter without the Prophet's (s) permission."[2]

"At times Gabriel (ʻa) would appear to him as a handsome person; this happened most of the time. At other times, he would appear in his real shape, this being less frequent - a couple of times altogether - the first of which was at the onset of the Revelation at Mount Hira when the Prophet (s) saw Gabriel (ʻa) in a form astride the expanse of the horizon from the east to the west, and the Prophet (s) lost consciousness. Then, Gabriel (ʻa) appeared as a man and embraced him. The Prophet (s) came to himself. "[3] The second time the Prophet (s) asked Gabriel (ʻa) to make his appearance in his real shape. Gabriel said, "You cannot endure to see me." He said, "I

1. *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 18, p. 260.
2. Ibid, vol. 18, p. 256.
3. Ibid, vol. 18, p. 247.

love it." One moon-lit night the Prophet (s) went to his praying room, Gabriel (‘a) appeared to him. Seeing him, the Messenger of God again lost consciousness, but regained it later."[1]

In closing, we consider it necessary to mention that within the hierarchy of the revelation, Gabriel (‘a) has a specific rank, natural and real: all knowledge that comes from God, the Exalted, has to cross this passage, even when the Revelation comes directly from God, the Most Exalted. By the difference in the ranks of the Revelation it means the difference in the scales which the Prophet's soul ascends. Sometimes the Prophet (s) ascends and arrives at the position where the angel of Revelation is, sees him and hears his word. At other times, he soars still higher, does not see Gabriel (‘a), and receives the Word directly from God, the Most Exalted. Gabriel (‘a) is, however, an intermediary.

Concerning this, Allamah Tabataba'i writes: "To hold to the belief that the Revelation is communicated *from behind the veil* or through the angel of Revelation is not in opposition with belief in God's direct speech, because the Revelation is an act of God the Most Exalted and is carried out through the intermediary as are other acts. Difference in variety of the Revelation is related with difference in the attention of the person being addressed. If the Prophet (s) directs his attention to the intermediary who carries the Revelation – Gabriel (‘a), he receives God's word from him. If he does not, he receives Almighty God's

1. Ibid, vol. 56, p. 259.

word directly. If a Prophet's (‘a) attention was directed to something that is not the carrier of the Revelation – like the tree in the case of Prophet Moses' revelation – then Almighty God's word would be heard coming from behind the veil. Gabriel (‘a) being the intermediary is however maintained."[1]

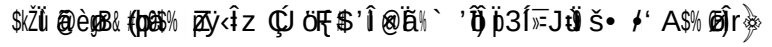
The Angel of Revelation

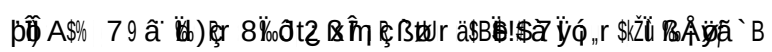
Divine religions have acknowledged the existence of beings called angels, who have particular responsibilities to achieve in the world of creation, and the Prophets have reported the same. Reference has also been made to them in divine books: the Qur'an, the Torah and the Injeel. In the Qur'an, there are about eighty verses mentioning the existence of the angels. It can therefore be said that in divine religions, in particular the holy Qur'an, it is a firmly established principle that angels exist, but no rational proof can be offered in support of their existence. The kind of life they lead and the reality of their existence is not clear to us.

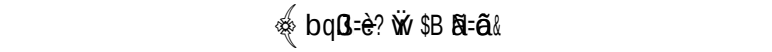
The following points can be understood from the Qur'an and Traditions:

1. Angels existed before Adam (‘a) was created:

1. *Al-Mizan*, vol. 14, p. 149.

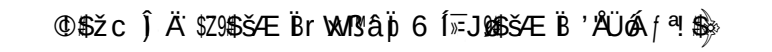


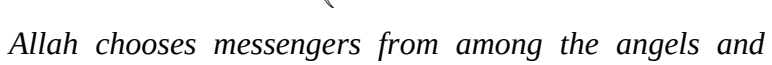




And when your Lord said to the angels, I am going to place in the earth a khalifa, they said: What! Wilt Thou place in it such as shall make mischief in it and shed blood, and we celebrate Thy praise and extol Thy holiness? He said: Surely I know what you do not know. (2:30)

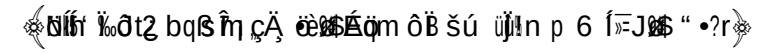
2. Certain angels have been chosen as messengers, as stated by the holy Qu'ran:





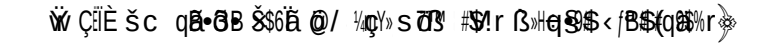
Allah chooses messengers from among the angels and from among the men; surely Allah is Hearing, Seeing. (22:75)

3. They surround God's throne. The glorious Qur'an says,



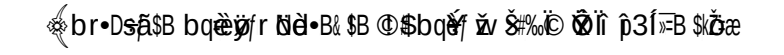
And you shall see the angels going round about the throne glorifying the praise of their Lord. (39:75)

4. They are obedient to God, the Most Glorious. The Qur'an says:



And they say: The Beneficent God has taken to Himself a son. Glory be to Him. Nay! They are honored servants. They do not precede Him in speech and only according to His commandment do they act. (21:26-7)

5. Angels negate any disobedience to God, and fulfill their mission: The Holy Quran says:



O you who believe! Save yourselves and your families from a fire whose fuel is men and stones; over it are angels stern and strong, they do not disobey Allah in what He commands them, and do as they are commanded. (66:6)

It is understood that angels are made of light, are incorporeal and nonmaterial; they do not eat, and do not marry. They have no shape, no length and no width; they do not go to sleep, they are never heedless and forgetful. They have not come into existence through procreation and are secure from committing sins. There are multitudes of traditions in this regard, some of which will be mentioned below:

With regard to the creation of the Angels, the Commander of the Faithful, Imam Ali (‘a) says, "Thou (O Allah) made angels reside in Thy skies. They do not become wearied

and neglectful; they do not disobey. They have the most knowledge about Thee and Thy whole creation. They fear Thee the most, and are the nearest to Thee. They are the most obedient in performing Thy commands. Slumber does not overtake their eyes; heedlessness does not overcome their hearts, and weakness does not take hold of their bodies. They have not stayed in loins nor were they retained in wombs. They were not created from mean water."[1]

Imam Sadiq (‘a) was asked "Do the angels eat and drink and marry?" He said, "No, but they live by inhaling the breath of the empyrean."[2]

Therefore, the angels have no bodies nor are they corporeal beings; they do not have a shape perceptible to human senses.

Jibreel (Gabriel)

He is one of the divinely proximate, *moqarrab* angels. The word Jibreel in Hebrew means a man of God, a servant of God, God's power.[3] Gabriel is the Angel of Revelation whom God has charged with communicating the Revelation to the Prophet (s). His name has repeatedly been mentioned in the Bible and the Qur'an. In the Book of Daniel we read "…when I, even I Daniel, had seen the vision, and sought for the meaning, then, behold, there stood before me the appearance of a man. And I heard a

1. *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 59, p. 175.
2. Ibid, p. 193.
3. *Dehkhoda Encyclopedia*.

man's voice between the banks of Ulai, which called, and said, Gabriel, make this man understand the vision."[1]

In the same book it is written:" And while I was speaking in prayer, even the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, being caused to fly swiftly, touched me about the time of the evening oblation. And he informed me, and talked to me and said, O Daniel, I have now come forth to give thee skill and understanding."[2]

In *the Book of Luke*, it is written: "And there appeared unto him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense."[3]

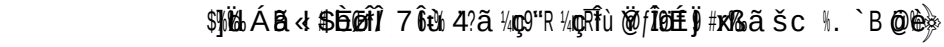
Another verse of the same book says: "And the angel, answering, said unto him, I am Gabriel; I stand in the presence of God. I have been sent to speak unto thee, and give thee these glad tidings."[4]

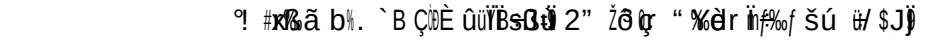
Yet another verse says, "And in the sixth month, the angel Gabriel, was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth."[5]

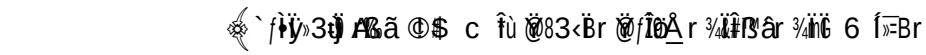
1. Daniel Part 8, verse 15.
2. Ibid, part 9, verse 21.
3. Good News Bible, The Book of Luke, part 1, verse 11.
4. Ibid, verse 20.
5. Ibid, verse 26.

Another verse says, "And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee."[1]

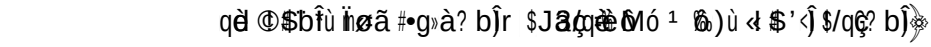
The Qur'an has also called the angel of Revelation, Gabriel:

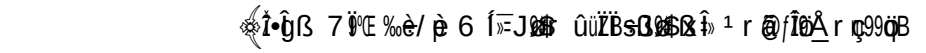






Say: Who is the enemy of Jibreel? For surely, he revealed it to your heart by Allah's command, verifying that which is before it, with guidance and good news for believers. Whoever is the enemy of Allah and His angels and His apostles and Jibreel and Meekaeel, then, surely, Allah is the enemy of the unbelievers. (2:35)

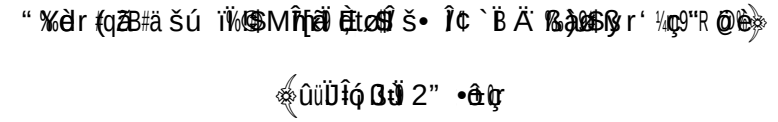




If you both turn to Allah, then indeed your hearts are already inclined (to this); and if you back up each other against him, then surely Allah it is Who is his Guardian, and Jibreel and the believers that do good and the angels after that, are aiders. (66:4)

1. Ibid, verse 35.

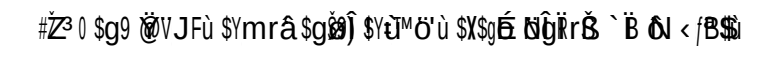
In some verses, the angel who brings the Revelation has been named *Ruh al-Qudus*, the Holy Spirit,



Say: The Holy Spirit has revealed it from your Lord with truth, that it may establish those who believe, and as a guidance and good news for those who submit. (16:102)

How Gabriel Descends

From the foregoing statements, it was understood that Gabriel (‘a), the angel of Revelation, would come to the Prophet (s) and deliver God's message, also, that the angels have no bodies nor are they corporeal beings to descend and be seen. They do not have the tongue and the mouth to speak with and do not possess the material sound to be heard, so what does it mean when reference is made to Gabriel descending and speaking, and how does this happen? The answer is: Gabriel's descent is not physical or as is technically called in the manner of *tajafi,* but he appeared like someone, *tamathal*. When referring to the descent of the angel on to Hazrat Maryam (‘a), the Qur'an has used the term *tamathala*- appeared*:*



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And mention Marium in the Book when she drew aside from her family to an eastern place. So, she took a veil to screen herself from them; then We sent to her Our spirit, and there appeared to her a well-made man. She said: Surely I fly for refuge from you to the Beneficent God, if you are a guardian against evil. He said, 'I am only a messenger of your Lord: that I should give you a pure boy. (19:16-9)

In *hadith* texts too the term *tamathala* has sometimes been used for the descent of Gabriel ('a) and other angels. It has also been applied with reference to certain circumstances such as: the time when a dying man's property, children and actions appear to him at his death-bed, when the Prophet (s) and the Infallible Imams ('a) appear to certain dying people, when the world appeared as a beautiful woman to the Commander of the Faithful, Ali ('a), when the angel of death or other angels appear to take somebody's life, when the Devil appears to certain people. There are also multitudes of other Traditions, an example of which is the statement of the Commander of the Faithful, Imam Ali ('a) who said, "When a person comes to the last day of his life in this world and the first day of his life in the next, his property, children and actions appear to him."[1]

1. Ibid, vol. 73, p. 84.

Imam Sadiq (ʿa) has quoted his predecessors who narrated the Commander of the Faithful, Ali, (ʿa) to have said, "I was shoveling some fields in Fadak, which was later on transferred to Fatima, when a woman hurried towards me. She was very attractive, like Bathina – the most beautiful woman among the Quraysh. She told me: 'If you marry me, I will make you needless of laboring, and will disclose to you the hidden treasures of the earth; you will be the ruler as long as you are alive.' I asked her, 'Who are you, so that I may ask your family for your hand?' She said 'I am the world.' I said, 'Return, and look for someone else to marry you. You are not my equal in rank.' This I said, and continued working."[1]

Books of history and Tradition report that Gabriel (ʿa) mostly appeared to the Prophet (s) in the form of Dahiyyeh Kalbi, a handsome person, and sometimes in the form of other men. Therefore, "the descent of Gabriel" should be interpreted in this way: During *tamathul,* Gabriel (ʿa) appeared according to the Prophet's capacity of perception, in the form of a particular person. It does not mean that Gabriel (ʿa) exchanged his angelic reality for humanity and then descended onto the presence of the Prophet (s). Allamah Tabataba'i - may his soul be sanctified - writes: The meaning of the angel's *tamathul* to Hazart Maryam, is that the angel appeared to Maryam in the form of a man – not that the angel became a man; if taken in this way, it will be a distortion of reality; it was in Mary's capacity of perception, and not in reality, that

1. Ibid, vol. 73, p. 84.

Gabriel (‘a) appeared as a man. It was Mary (‘a) who saw Gabriel (‘a) as such; Gabriel (‘a) did not take the human form."[1]

As an explanation, it can be said that Gabriel (‘a), an immaterial being who is made of light, has carried part of the divine knowledge and is ready to impart it. Because the Prophet's sacred and illuminated soul is free from sensual opacities and bodily attachments, a part of the knowledge of the truth available in Gabriel's essence transmits to his luminous heart when the Prophet (s) turns to the world above. This is the meaning of Revelation. At this stage of the Revelation, there is nothing other than the emanation of knowledge: no form and no speech. The form and the speech come into existence at the hierarchical levels of imagination and common sense after knowledge of the truths is brought down from the Prophet's heart and soul to his faculty of imagination and *sensus communis*. This is the point where Gabriel (‘a) appears to the Prophet (s) in the form of a handsome man and talks to him; in other words, this is the level where forms are produced.

The Prophet (s) was the only person who was able to behold Gabriel in the locus of his mind – in the form of a handsome man – and hear his word, but none of those around him could, except for those on whose souls the Prophet (s) had in his keeping and had prepared them for such perceptions.

1. *Al-Mizan*, vol. 14, p p. 36.

Readers should not suppose that we intend to say that beholding Gabriel (ʿa) and hearing his words is something vain, fancy and contrary to fact. Never; but we do say that the Prophet (s) did often see Gabriel in the form of Dahiyyeh Kalbi, and heard him speak. But all these occurred in the world of archetypal figures, *mithal*, and in the Prophet's capacity of imagination. This vision does not basically differ from the way external objects are seen. There, the human eye does not see the object that exists outside per se, but what one primarily sees is the form as it exists in one's capacity of imagination. This is true in the case of beholding the angel, but with the difference that in sense visions the form that exists in the 'common sense' and in the imagination has come from outside, through the instrumentality of the senses. This differs from the process of Revelation and the appearance of Gabriel's form because both come from the Prophet's heart and descend to his faculty of imagination. What is primarily known is however, is fancy existent.

The Prophet's Connection with the Angel, As Viewed by Islamic Philosophy

Islamic Philosophers have expressed meticulous ideas concerning the Prophet's relation with the angel of Revelation which can be useful in elucidating the matter. Ibn Khaldun writes: Far above this realm of human beings is the world of spirituality and angels. Man's soul has the propensity to cast off marks of humanity and ascend to the world of angels, which is above this world, be among the angels, obtain knowledge and learning from the transcendental world, and return to his former world of mankind, and convey to people what he has obtained from

the above. This is the meaning of revelation and the angels' address."[1]

Sadr al-Muta'allihin writes: When the Prophet's spirit ascended to the world of angels, that is, the world of divine Revelation, he heard the word of God Almighty, that is, the pronouncement of realities, from the rank described in the Qur'an as "قاب قوسين او ادنى" - *"the measure of two bows or closer still*". This is the divinely proximate rank, again in Qur'anic words "مقعد صدق" - "*the seat of honor*". Here, "the Revelation" means the real speech of the Divine.

When the Prophet's spirit established communication with the Illiyyin angels, he heard the sound of the 'Pen' and their word being inspired, which is the word of God revealed to their hearts, because these angels are stationed in divine proximity. The Prophet (s) said, "In my nocturnal ascension (*Mi'raj*) I arrived at a station where I could hear the sound of the angels' pen." When the Prophet's spirit ascends to the world above and arrives at the celestial kingdom, 'the form' of what he has seen in the world of *Qadarieh Spirits* will be typified for him in concrete Form, *tamathul*; then pass on to his outward appearance, and, as a result, a state similar to fear and sleep overcomes his senses. It was previously said that the Prophet's divine spirit occupies a position between the corporeal world (*Mulk*) and the kingdom of heaven (*Malakut*) and looks in both directions. He then uses his perceptions and senses not for animal purposes, but for traveling to the Lord of

1. *Muqaddimah* of Ibn Khaldun, Translated by Franz Rosenthal.

the universe. The perceptions will then obey the soul, *nafs*, in acquiring knowledge and obeying God, the Almighty.

When such a person, "the Prophet", is addressed by God, the Glorified – be it directly or through the mediation of the angel of Revelation – and is connected to the World of the Unseen, on his soul will be reflected an image of the kingdom of heaven and a 'form' of the world of pure intellects, *jabarut*, with the result that a typification (*mithal*) of the Revelation and the angel that carries it will be manifested to his inner sense. At this time, the Prophet's outward sense will be drawn towards that direction, and a Form of the reality will be typified for him. It should be mentioned that these Forms and appearances are true; they are not dreams nor are they vain fancies.

Thus the angel appears to the Prophet (s) as a perceptible figure so that he will be able to endure beholding him. He sees the angels in a form different from actuality. This is because an incorporeal being becomes a created and finite entity on stepping down to the world of creation. Here, he – the angel - manifests himself and is heard, although, at higher planes of the Revelation he was intelligible (*ma'qul*). The angel sometimes appears in the form of a Guarded Tablet.

So it is from the World of Unseen that the Angel of Revelation, his word and his record descend, *nazalah*, to the Prophet's sensual perceptions. This descending should not be taken to mean that the angel steps down his rank, through a bodily transfer, *tajafi*, but it means the Prophet's

descent from the mystical mode of life to the apparent mode, this being different from his mode: from the visible sensual world to the World of the Unseen."[1]

A summary of the words of this scholar is: In an esoteric travel, the angelic soul of the Prophet (s) ascends to the world of the angels which is the source of divine knowledge. Here, with the eye of his heart he sees the angel of Revelation; with his inward ear hearing he listens to his word which is God's speech. It is in such a state that the knowledge existing in the illuminated soul of the angel of Revelation will be transmitted to the Prophet's illuminated heart.

Since the Prophet's sacred spirit occupies a position between the corporeal world and the kingdom of heaven, it can simultaneously maintain both aspects; that is, with his sacred spirit, his inner ear and eye, he sees the world of the Unseen and the angel Gabriel, and listens to his word. At the same time, what he sensually perceives is manifested to his power of imagination; it then steps down to his 'common sense' and finally to his external senses. It is here that Gabriel (‘a) appears to him in a beautiful and familiar Form. The Prophet (s) sees him and hears him.

Constitutive elements of the Revelation

The Revelation – the link with the World of the Unseen – is made up of several elements:

1. *Mafatih al-Ghayb*, p. 36; Asfar, part 2, the third journey, page 27.

1. The Source of the Revelation: The Revelation comes from God, the Most Sacred, who communicates with the Prophet (s) either directly or through the Angel of the Revelation.

2. The Angel who carries the revelation, Gabriel (ʻa), who is a natural and ontological being. The Prophet (s) sees him typified as a handsome youth, and at times in his real form, and hears him.

3. The recipient of the Revelation a perfect man. Because of his infallibility, renunciation of sins and worldly attachments, and due to purity of his soul, he has the capacity to establish connection with the World of the Unseen and receive the divine knowledge. All Prophets have been like this. Logically speaking, receiving of the revelation is not exclusive to the Prophets. Whoever attains such a perfect rank can establish connection with the World of the Unseen and receive sciences and knowledge, but this is statement that requires definite proof. If this came true, the inspiration would not be "legislative".

4. The Content is the totality of divine knowledge revealed to the Prophet, including knowledge of the Lord of the worlds, His positive and negative attributes, knowledge concerning the resurrection, the hereafter and the Prophecy; that is, knowledge of the fundamentals of belief - rationally provable too – and of the branches thereof. These are all received only through the Revelation. Revelation also mentions the Prophets of the past and the history of bygone nations or individuals that can serve as lessons in directing and guiding men. It specifies the noble moral traits, and calls people to observe them, refers to

moral evils and prohibits people from committing them, even though the intellect may also claim to be able to disclose them. Revelation contains instructions on manners of worshipping God, the Almighty, on the obligatory (*wajib*) and recommended (*mustahhab*) acts. It explains unlawful acts, *haram* – those that harm one's material life here and his essential life in the hereafter. The Revelation has precepts and rules – political, social, legal, criminal, economical, hygienic, military and disciplinary ones – that are necessary for one's prosperity in life.

In short, the holy Qur'an and the Prophetic traditions taken together make up the content of the Revelation.

The Revelation and Inerrancy

Question*:* Are the revealed truths – the Qur'an, the Torah, the Gospel and other truths that the Prophets have brought – definite and immune from error, or fallible?

There are two answers to this question:

First*:* Muslims have accepted the first possibility, saying that the truths mentioned in the Qur'an, including words and expressions, have all been revealed from God, the Most Exalted; these have all originated from the Source of divine knowledge, and are immune from error. Prophet Muhammad (s) was immune from error and lapse of memory in receiving the revelation, in guarding it and in propagating it. Muslims hold the same belief in other matters pertaining to the Revelation, i.e. the things that the Prophet (s) used to introduce as *wahy,* and have been proved with evidence as having come from him.

A group of traditional Christians also hold the same belief concerning the Holy Scripture and the revealed truths:

"By the beginning of the seventeenth century the Bible was seen by many Protestants as the deposit of *inerrant information,* including information about scientific questions, which had been dictated by God. Rather than being a record of events in which God revealed Himself, scripture was itself viewed as infallible knowledge in propositional form verbally imparted by God"[1]

The book *Philosophy of Religion* says:" The revelation is a body of truths expressed in statements or propositions. Revelation is the imparting to people of divinely authenticated truths. In the words of the *Catholic Encyclopedia,* 'Revelation may be defined as the communication of some truth by God to a rational creature through means which are beyond the ordinary course of nature."[2]

But most modern scholars in Christianity have interpreted the revelation differently, and have not considered the content of the Bible to be immune from error:

In *Issues in Science and Religion* Ian Barbour writes*:*, "God had revealed himself, not in the dictation of an infallible book, but in His presence in the lives of Christ, the prophets, and the people of Israel. Scripture was then

1. *Issues in Science and Religion,* Barbour, Ian G. Harper Torchbooks, p. 29.
2. *Philosophy of Religion,* John Hick, p. 62; Prentice-Hall Inc. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, l983.

not revelation but a human witness to the human experience of revelation"[1]

In his *Philosophy of Religion*, John H. Hick has said, "According to the Reformers of the sixteenth century (Luther and Calvin and their associates) the content of revelation is not a body of truths about God, but God coming within the orbit of human experience by acting in history. From this point of view, theological propositions, as such, are not revealed but represent human attempts to understand the significance of revelatory events"[2]

In his *Issues in Science and Religion*, Ian Barbour writes, "Revelation, says Archbishop Temple, occurs in events together with their representation. In this view the locus of God's action was not the dictation of an inerrant book, or the transmission of infallible doctrine, but *events in the lives of individuals and communities*. The Bible itself is a purely human record about these revelatory events"[3]

The same author writes, "Luther, and even Calvin, had been somewhat flexible in biblical interpretation. For them, the locus of authority was not the verbal text itself, but the person of Christ to whom scripture pointed. Scripture was important as the witness to the redemptive events in which God's love and forgiveness in Christ had been mediated in their personal experience. To the early

1. Ibid, p. 133.
2. *Issues in Science and Religion*, pp. 106-7.
3. Ibid, p.230.

Reformers, the Living Word is confirmed in man's own experience by the Holy Spirit"[1]

Some Christian scholars have permitted the likelihood of errors concerning the Prophet of Islam (s). One writes," To say that Muhammad was sincere does not imply that he was correct in his beliefs. A man may be sincere but mistaken. The modern Western has no difficulty in showing how Muhammad may have been mistaken."[2]

The opinion that the scholars in Christianity have expressed concerning the possibility of error in the revealed truths comes from the particular manner they have interpreted the revelation and its referent. For example, they interpreted the revelation as the Divine epiphany in Jesus (‘a), considered him as the referent of the revelation and his word like the word of a human being who is prone to error. We have, however, pointed the invalid basis of this view. That the structure is false is as a result apparent.

Muslims hold the belief that not only was Prophet Muhammad (s) but also all other truthful Prophets were immune from any error, fault, negligence, and sin. They also believe that the Prophet is infallible, *ma'sum*, in receiving the revelation, in preserving it, and in propagating it, because infallibility, *isma*, is an undeniable condition for prophethood. Books on theology have

1. Ibid, p. 29.
2. *Muhammad Prophet and Stateman*. W. Montgomery Watt, Oxford University Press, l961, p. 17.

investigated the matter in detail, and have presented rational and revealed evidence, *naqli*.

It is said that Prophets' most important aim is to fully put at man's disposal the revealed truths they need in order to travel the path to happiness in this and in the next world, in physical and spiritual issues. This is a mission that cannot be achieved except through *isma*. If the Prophet were to err as others do, what guarantee would there be for the revealed truths to be fully put at people's disposal? Referring to this, the Qur'an says:

The Knower of the unseen does not reveal His secrets to any, except to him whom He chooses as an apostle; for surely He makes a guard to march before him and after him so that He may know that they have truly delivered the messages of their Lord, and He encompasses what is with them, and He records the number of all things. (72:26-8)

Allamah Tabatabai'i, who has interpreted the above verse, writes: "The phrase "*before him*" means between the Messenger of God (s) and the people to whom he has been sent; the phrase "*after him*" refers to the link between the Prophet and the source of the Revelation, God Almighty. The verse indicates that the Divine Revelation is immune from error and mistake. In receiving the revelation and communicating it to people the Prophet (s) is protected against Satan's interference. This is indicated by the verse

"*so that He may know that they have truly delivered the messages of their Lord*". It is thus understood that the revelation aims to be externally communicated and actualized. If the Prophets were not infallible, there would be no guarantee for the actualization of the goal."[1]

Thus, based on definite rational and scriptural, (naqli), demonstrations,

Definite rational and scriptural, *naqli*, proofs leave no doubt that Prophets are inerrant and the revelation is also secure against any error and mistake.

We don't, however, mean that whatever books of history and hadith have attributed to the Prophet is hundred percent correct. This assertion is true only in the case of the Qur'an, which has definitely come from God, the Almighty, and in the case of those *hadiths* that have been authentically proved to have come from the Prophet (s).

The revelation, it can be said, differs from conventionally acquired knowledge in that in the process of revelation, the revealed truths are communicated directly from God, the Almighty, to the Prophet's (s) heart and soul, without the external sense areas being involved it. The revealed truths are not like concepts but a kind of intuitive and direct witnessing that does not err. Being present and witnessing reality is unerring. Therefore, there is no error in receiving the revelation, in its descent from the Prophet's spirit to his sense perception and in communicating it to people because it has come from the Prophet's direct observation

1. *Al-Mizan*, vol. 2, p. 129.

and his inmost essence, and this esoteric support is the Prophet's prerogative forever and everywhere.

How to Make Sure

Skeptics may say: there is no doubt that Prophets were truthful people who sometimes sensed they were being inspired. But how did they recognize God's word from satanic suggestions or sensual drives?

As already said, the answer is that revelation differs from conventionally acquired knowledge, in which there is the possibility of error. Revealed knowledge is communicated to the Prophet's inmost essence, and he directly perceives it. At the time of the revelation and in a manner in which there is no possibility of error, the Prophet (s) sees with the eye of his heart the reality and truth of the issue that is being revealed. Certain *hadiths* have referred to this event too:

A. Zurarah says, "I said to Imam Sadiq (ʿa): 'How come that the Prophet (s) does not fear that what is being revealed to him might possibility be satanic suggestions?' The Imam (ʿa) said, 'When God appoints a Messenger, He sends down tranquility and solemnity upon him. Then he sees what comes to him from God in the same way he sees things with his eyes."[1]

1. *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 18, p. 262.

B. Imam Sadiq (ʿa) was asked, "How do Prophets know that they are Messengers?" the Imam said, "The veil is drawn away from their faces."[1]

C. Muhammad b. Muslim and Muhammad b. Marwan have quoted Imam Sadiq (ʿa) to have said, "It was only because of Divine grace that the Messenger of God (s) knew Gabriel (ʿa) came from God, the Almighty."[2]

D. Shaykh Mufid mentions a different way to solve the problem: "Because the Prophet (s) had been gifted with miracles, he knew that the word inspired was Almighty God's, not Satan's. Since the Qur'an was a miracle, the Prophet (s) was well aware that it was revealed from God, and was His speech just as Prophet Moses (ʿa) by virtue of the miracles (the White Hand) and (Transformation of the staff into a serpent), was certain and convinced that the words he heard from the tree were from God."[3]

It must, therefore, be said that, from the very beginning the Prophet (s) realized that he had been made the Prophet and that it was the word of God that was being communicated to him. He had no doubt about it. There was no uncertainty to need reassurance by others. If books of history have mentioned something other than this, it is unacceptable.

1. Ibid, vol. 11, p. 56.
2. Ibid, vol. 18, p. 256.
3. *Al-Masa'il al-'Akbariyeh*, p. 38.

Signs of the Communication of Revelation

From certain eye-witness reports of the Companions of the Prophet it is understood that whenever revelation came, the Prophet's mood and state changed and signs, which the companions considered as indications of the inspiration, appeared on him.

A. It has been related: "The communication of the revelation was so exacting on the Prophet that even in the cold season he would sweat and drops of sweat would run down his cheeks." Also, "His complexion would change and his head would bend – a state that the companions called *baraha al-wahy.*"[1]

B. It has been reported that, as a result of the revelation that would at times come to him while he was amongst the companions, the Prophet (s) would swoon, and drops of sweat would run down his body. Having recovered, he would say: "God has said such and such a thing, has commanded you to do this and that, and has prohibited you from such and such acts."[2]

C. Akramah says: "Whenever the revelation came to the Messenger of God (s), he would collapse to the ground similar to an intoxicated person."[3]

D. Abu Arwi says, "I saw the Messenger of God (s); he was on his riding animal when the revelation came to him. The animal let out a loud sound; its legs gave away as if

1. *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol.18, p. 261.
2. Ibid, p. 260.
3. *Al-Tabaqat al-Kubra*, vol. 1,p. 197.

they were about to break. Because of the intense heaviness, it would sometimes kneel down and at other times its legs would stand fixed and motionless. This continued until the revelation came to an end. Drops of sweat that looked like beads of pearl rolled down the Prophet's head and face."[1]

From certain *ahadith* it is understood that such changes in the Prophet's state happened only when he received the revelation directly from God, without the intermediary of the Angel of the Revelation.

Zurareh has quoted his father to have said, "I asked Imam Sadiq (s) for an elucidation of the "swooning" state that overcame the Prophet (s) in the process of the revelation. He said, "It occurred when there was no intermediary between Almighty God and the Prophet (s), when God Almighty became manifest to him. This is *nubuwwat*."[2]

Hesham b. Salem reports that some companions of Imam Sadiq (‘a) asked him: "How was it that the Messenger of God sometimes said 'Gabriel; this is Gabriel; he is giving me an order', and at other times he would swoon?' Imam Sadiq (‘a) said, "The state of swooning occurred whenever the revelation came to him directly from God, the Almighty, without the agency of Gabriel (‘a). But such a state would not take place when Gabriel (‘a) was present.

1. Ibid.
2. Ibid, vol. 18, p. 256.

On such occasions he said, 'Gabriel said such and such things; and 'This is Gabriel."[1]

From these reports, it is understood that in times of revelation an extraordinary state would seize the Prophet (s), and because those who were present could not explain it properly, they called it: "in the form of intoxication; submerged; when the revelation submerged him; heaviness on his body;" – whereas it could indeed be called a kind of remoteness from the present world and attachment to the World of the Unseen. This condition being very hard for a corporeal human being to endure expressed itself in such states because it is very hard for a corporeal human being – however exalted he might be in rank - to communicate with God, the Almighty, who says in the Qur'an:

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Surely We will make light upon you a weighty Word. (73:5)

Ibn Khaldun writes, "In the state of inspiration, the Prophets seem remote from the present world. This is accompanied by a condition that looks like swooning or unconsciousness but has nothing to do with either. In reality, it is an immersion in and encounter with the angel of revelation. At this time, they have particular perceptions

1. Ibid, p. 268.

which are entirely different from the ordinary perceptions of men."[1]

Elsewhere he writes, "Among men, there must be outstanding individuals who at certain moments can shed the state of humanity for angelicality, ascend to the realm of the angels, receive knowledge and learning, then return to their (former rank of) humanity, and communicate it to others. This is revelation. It is due to this shedding of humanity that they are engulfed by extraordinary states and sounds."[2]

This may have been one of the reasons the Prophet of Islam (s) was accused by the enemies of Islam of being epileptic or mad or psychologically ill. This is an entirely false accusation because history bears witness that before he was made a Prophet, Muhammad (s) lived a completely healthy life without ever being charged with epilepsy or madness – neither in childhood, nor in youth or in middle age. History would have referred to it if he had been. In ordinary circumstances no signs of epilepsy or madness were ever noted in him. It was merely at the time of the revelation that the extraordinary states appeared in him. Because the enemies of Islam knew nothing about the truth, they falsely charged him with epilepsy or madness, and thus displayed their enmity.

Can an epileptic or mad person produce a book like the Qur'an, enact far-reaching and precise laws, put at men's disposal profound sciences and knowledge such as those

1. *Muqaddimah* of Ibn Khaldun, p. 70.
2. Ibid, page 598.

mentioned in the Qur'an and *hadith* literature, so carefully and prudently endeavor to propagate Islam, neutralize various enemies' plans, and firmly establish the bases of Islam? If the accusations had been true, would the Muslims in the early days of Islam, who were fully aware of the Prophet's state, have surrendered to such a person, and sacrificed their lives for his causes? No intelligent person accepts such a probability.

Revelation: Manifestation of Prophet's inner Personality

Some western scholars have considered the revelation, God's communication with man, an impossible event, because God is immaterial and infinite whereas the Prophet is a material and finite being. Thus verbal communication between these two beings is impossible. God does not occupy space, does not have the tongue and the mouth to speak to the Prophet. How can the Prophet, a human being, communicate with God?

These scholars did not have justifiable explanations to offer with regard to the possibility of the revelation and its quality; therefore they denied it. But ever since discussions began on the human spirit and scientists obtained wonderful results through lengthy and repeated tests and experiments, an avenue was opened before them to give explanations and comments on the revelation, and they came to believe in some kind of revelation. Having worked for a long time and conducted abundant experiments, psychologists arrived at the conclusion that man possesses two levels (= personalities), the sensual and the spiritual. The former is his usual and apparent personality; it functions through the instrumentality of

apparent senses and is limited in its ability. The latter is his inner and concealed existence called the innermost conscience or his second personality. They say: in this world, we do not live with the entirety of our existence; only a small portion of it operates within the limitation of our feeble senses. We do possess a higher, more extensive existence which we often neglect; this, we employ only when our usual activities come to a standstill through natural sleep or hypnotism.

Scientists have hypnotized many people, and through carefully chosen questions and answers acquired interesting information about the thoughts and past and future lives of the subject and of others.

In a state of trance one can tell about the hidden happenings of the past and future, instantly travel to very far localities and report the events, or go to the past and watch the occurrences, and at times instantly give answers to mathematical problems that would take hours to solve.

There are also other people who display such ability - some for a short period, others for a few months or even a few years - while they are in a normal state and not asleep. Scientists have studied these cases and written books about them. From all these it can be concluded that in addition to his apparent and known personality, one has within him a more powerful and unknown personality that sometimes comes to the fore and leaves impressions.

Using the outcome of above researches, some scholars have attempted to explain the revelation communicated to Prophets, and have said: "Revelation is not communicated from outside but comes from the Prophet's innermost

nature, *dhat*. It is the Prophet's second personality - inner and superior as it is- that suggests matters into his heart, gives him programs for his own as well as for society's welfare, provides him with the hidden news of the past and future, and talks to him. At times, his inner personality visualizes for him a form that talks to him. And he imagines that it is the angel of revelation that has brought him messages from God, whereas it is nothing but manifestation of the inner personality."[1]

In their commentary on Revelation, these scientists have said: it is true that Prophets were sincere and honest, had no desire to tell lies and were truthful when they said that truths were being revealed to them from the invisible world; but these were suggestions that came from their inner personality, not from outside or from God or through the angel of revelation. The Prophets confused these suggestions with divine revelation.

Answer: First*:* Even if we accept the idea of the second and inner personality, and agree that at times it can impress one's apparent personality and make suggestions, there is no reason to maintain that the realities suggested to the Prophets were of the same type, that is, they were not from God. Revelation came from God, and this possibility cannot be denied – a probability that we have to bear in mind.

Second: Books of theology and philosophy have proved that men need divine guidance in order to recognize ways

1. *Qarn al-Ishrin Encyclopedia*, vol. 10, pp. 707-720, under the entry wahy, "Revelation".

and manners of their service to God for the achievement of material and spiritual felicity in this world and the next. This guidance is provided by sending Messengers and Prophets. It has also been proved that God, the Almighty, does not deprive His servants from such divine gifts. We must therefore accept that the sending of Prophets and the effusion of the hidden knowledge are necessities. God must send Prophets and give them the necessary knowledge. For details, readers may refer to books on creed and theology.

Third*:* In books of theology, it has been proved that the claim of those who claim to be the Prophets cannot be substantiated by mere claims they make, but should be accompanied with miracles and extraordinary works. The Revelation - man's connection with God, talking to Him and receiving the hidden knowledge – is itself extraordinary. Thus, the person who claims Prophecy must work miracles. That is why throughout history the truthful Prophets have always provided miracles. This of course does not mean that the Prophet should always perform extraordinary works wherever someone demanded it, but it means that the Prophet provides miracles whenever and to the extent they are necessary as proof of his credibility in receiving the Revelation from God, the Almighty. All this differs from the people who have come to realize realities through their second personality but have not claimed prophecy nor did they have miracles to offer.

Fourth*:* The limited knowledge of a person in a state of hypnotic trance or in the time of unusual occurrences – like solving a few complicated mathematical problems and their inadequate report of a few past and future events -

can never match the Prophets' hidden and extensive knowledge manifested in lengthy periods of time and under ordinary circumstances.

For example, the holy Qur'an, containing various instructions on doctrinal, moral, social, political, belief, hygienic, holy war, defensive, educational, economical, spatial, penal, and scores of other issues, was revealed to the Prophet within twenty three years in various circumstances – even in war. Besides, through the Prophetic Traditions various other knowledge and extensive rules and regulations that present an all-comprehensive and complete religion have come to us. Could all these sciences and wide-ranging programs inherent in the religion of Islam have come from the inner personality of Muhammad (s)? No right-minded and fair person will ever accept such a claim.

Prophecy and Genius

Some intellectuals have considered Prophecy (*nubuwwat*) to be a sort of talent and the Prophets among the geniuses, saying that like other talented persons, Prophets were prominent men of their age, fully talented, bright in mind, insightful in their inferences, and illuminated in mentality, who had profound thoughts and high aspirations, considered the welfare of their people, were aware of the social problems and eager to solve them. That is why they made efforts to set people's beliefs right, and enjoined them to observe moral excellence. In order to implement reforms into people's affairs and provide social security they enacted laws and issued commands and called it a

divinely ordained duty to observe these rules and a divine mission to strive to put them into practice.

In short, the Prophets had no particular relation with God and there was no revelation but imaginations stemming from the mind of these men of genius which they attributed to God.

Below are a few answers to these intellectuals:

First*:* As it was said earlier, the sending of prophets is a theological necessity. Men need guidance of the Divine and instructions of the Prophets in order to recognize ways and manners of their service to God for the achievement of material and spiritual felicity in this world and the next. Therefore, God, the Wise, must send prophets and give them the necessary knowledge, regulations and laws. Being a genius is not sufficient for these needs to be fulfilled.

Second*:* As it was already pointed out, it has been theologically proved that the prophets worked miracles to prove their credibility, whereas the men of genius are denied this divine confirmation.

Third*:* If the plans and programs of prophets had been the product of their intellectual genius, they did not have to ascribe them to Revelation and to the divine source, because it is generally agreed that the prophets were neither cheaters nor deceivers; they did not tell lies either.

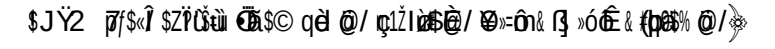
Prophecy and Insanity

Some people hold to the belief that the claim of receiving the revelation and of having been appointed to the office of prophecy is caused by some kind of insanity and mental

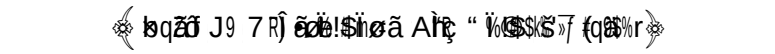
disorder. They explain their opinion in this way: The Prophets were faithful, prejudiced and sympathetic towards people and wished them well; the injustice and oppression of transgressors and the innocence and deprivation of the weak caused them pain. They constantly meditated on solutions and social reforms to the extent that they were wont to mental imbalance and occasional distorted dreams in which they heard voices and received matters. When they woke, they thought that the dreams were realities and truths that came to them from God in the form of revelations, and that they had become prophets. When these ideas acquired force, they sometimes felt the same in the waking state: they heard voices, felt that matters were being suggested to their hearts, and occasionally saw a human being talking to them bringing messages from God and giving them missions.

They took these as parts of reality, considered the latter event to be the revelation and regarded themselves as prophets. But these all came from their sensitive, prejudiced and imbalanced innermost being, but not from God or revelation. There has been no revelation, and no angels, only illusion and fantasy. You may see similar delusions, imaginations, visions and conversations in some mad persons.

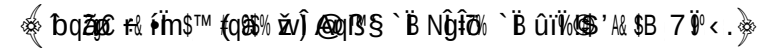
This was the upshot of the explanations of these people, and it is not unprecedented. At the time of the revelation of the Qur'an certain obstinate people accused the Prophet (s) in a similar way:



Nay! Say they: Medleys of dreams; nay! He has forged it; nay! He is a poet; so let him bring to us a sign as the former prophets were sent with. (21:5)



And they say: O you to whom the Reminder has been revealed! You are most surely insane. (15:6)



Thus there did not come to those before them an apostle but they said: A magician or a mad man. (51:52)

It is understood from similar verses that in the time of the Prophet of Islam (s) certain people brought charges against him calling him insane, magician or poet; they thus fought against him. These people could be divided into two groups: the first were the ignorant people who failed to understand the proper meaning of the revelation and the sense of the Prophet's relation with God Almighty, which is a metaphysical matter. Therefore, to justify their views and satisfy their conscience and dissuade people from following the Prophet, they denied the Prophet's mission and accused him of being insane, a magician, or a poet.

Those in the second group were the obstinate and disbelieving people who brought accusations to stop Islam's publicity and spread.

But, any one who is fair and knowledgeable knows that the Prophet's sanctified dignity is free from such accusations, as the following points clarify:

1. The life of the Prophet of Islam (s), before and after he was raised to prophecy, is quite clear: all details of his life have been recorded in history books and are available to all. Any fair and unbiased person when he refers to his life will realize that he lived a life of perfect wisdom and balanced intellect without the slightest point of weakness to be taken as evidence of insanity or distraction.

In family life, in associations with relatives and companions, in time of war and peace, in preaching, in explaining ordinances and laws, in conduct with enemies, and whatever state he was in, he was insightful and mindful, and acted perfectly wisely. If he had a different state of mind, it would have surely been recorded in history, and his enemies would not have so easily let it go by.

2. The holy Qur'an, which was revealed to the Messenger of God (s) within 23 years, can be recognized as the best evidence of his perfect wisdom and balanced intellect. Is an insane person or a magician capable of bringing such a beautiful book that contains a wide variety of scientifically, ideologically, morally, historically, politically and sociologically weighty matters, without there being the slightest trace of intellectual imbalance?

3. The laws in the religion of Islam, the extensive and accurate rules and the laws enacted on doctrinal, political, social, juridical and judicial issues, are the best evidence to his perfect intellect and healthy mind.

4. Those who opposed Islam were themselves uncertain when they accused the Prophet (s) of insanity; they were in doubt whether to attribute him with madness, magic, or maker of poems. They sometimes said: he is mad; at other times they called him a magician, and at others addressed him as a poet. These have been mentioned in the Qur'anic verses.

The Prophet's Brain Is the Place Where Revelation came

One of the Islamic scholars, commenting on revelation and the abode (*mahall*) where it has been communicated, has made a new assertion which I think would be appropriate to mention here. He thinks that the Prophet's brain is the abode wherein revelation is communicated; he offers details in support of his claim, summarized in three parts stated below:

Part One*:* The Qur'an has clearly named the heart as the abode for the communication of the revelation:

﴿ûïíÉZ3ø‹s`Ï bqàÇï 7Îû 4?ã ÇÙÈ Ò>ÏF$$Ÿr•9$ïÎ A“Ρ﴾

The Faithful Spirit has descended with it, upon your heart that you may be of the warners. (26:193-4)

In Arabic the term *qalb*, "heart", means "turning something completely around". This conical member –the center for blood circulation – is called "the heart" because it is the focal point for the blood to turn around carrying vital oxygen and other materials to various organs including the heart and the brain.

Taken literally, the brain may also be called "qalb" because it turns subtle material – the thought – completely

around, separates the useful elements from the corrupt and invalid ones, and takes the worthless matters out. Therefore, it is more appropriate to call the brain "qalb". Thus, in the above verse the term "the heart" implies "the brain"; it is the Prophet's brain that has been the place for the communication of the revelation.

Part Two*:* In part two, he has meticulously examined the brain, mentioned the wonders of its creation, described the function of each region, and has pointed to multitudes of various cells, the size and the nutritional requirement of the brain, and scores of other details.

In closing, he draws the conclusion that any human being who has fully been able to actualize the potential capability of his brain cells has made the most of it, and has attained the highest possible degree of psycho-cerebrum perfection. It is only this particular person that is closer to the rank of being God's *khalifa* on the earth. In other words, to become God's caliph on the earth is correlated with one's capacity, the growth and development of his brain mind and facilities available to him, this being a possibility God, the Almighty, has placed in the brain of this higher being. The author has then attempted to define the loftier being, and refers to Qur'anic verses:

﴿øŸy‹îz ÇJ öRF$'Î@Ä‰` '0ïþ3Í»=Jtï š• ƒ‘ A$‰ øÎr﴾

And when your Lord said to the angels, I am going to place in the earth a khalifa. (2:30)

﴿ètøÎ Ä $Z9$ûï/ Lå+n$ÏÇJ öRF$'Î øŸy‹îz 7»Yèè_ $RÎ Ð¼ã‰»ƒ﴾

O Dawood, surely We have made you a ruler in the land; so judge between men with justice. (37:26)

In his definition of *Khalifa* the author writes: In the above verses, God Almighty has appointed as his khalifa, certain people who should have the following characteristics: Psychologically, intellectually, and by their disposition they should be worthy of representing God, leading and guiding people, judging with justice, avoiding gusts of passions, showing Divine signs in human beings, nature and history; guiding men in using the God-given powers in order to get closer to God, the One, and rendering services to Him.

Part Three*:* In part three of his article, he writes: In the Qur'an, the term "revelation" implies different meanings: a quick hint; an allusion; a coded speech, an inner voice; subjection in sleep; subordination of instincts; and suggestions made to the heart, i.e. to the brain. These clearly indicate that some kind of stimulation which is beyond the usual sensory-motor activities occurs in brain cells. In other words, in these circumstances the brain cells that are involved in one's psycho-intellectual relations, but not his critical bio-processes, get involved.

A review of the above shows that:

First*:* Only one third of the twelve billion cells are responsible for vital sensory-motor functions; the rest are linked with particularly human characteristics such as speech, intelligence, memory, consciousness, perception, meditation, intellection, and so forth.

Second*:* When brain cells are assigned additional duties, the axons and dendrites increase, contributing to bilateral

link with other cells which are left as they are – short and thin.

Third: Brain cells are individual-specific in number; rarely two persons have the same number of brain cells, and seldom their brain cells function thoroughly alike. Genetically, some have more cells in one part of their brains, and are inherently gifted for comprehension or other specialized tasks. They seem to perceive things that others do not. This is because these people's brains are structurally different from others'. We can observe these differences in people.

When we compare the various meanings of the term revelation *wahy*, as used in the Qur'an with the above discussions, we gather that all human beings and some animals as well may be addressed by *wahy*. In human beings, there are various kinds of revelation too. With regard to the Revelation that concerns God's Messenger (s) and that of the Qur'an, however, the following particularities should be considered.

Prophet Muhammad, (s), was different from people of his age before he was made a Prophet and even during his childhood. These differences are recorded in books of history.

1. In his *Nahj al-Balaqa*, Imam 'Ali (‘a) has the following statement concerning the Prophet (s): “Since his early days, Allah assigned one of His greatest angels to lead him to the path of moralities and principles of high morality day and night.

2. Abu Talib has reported the following concerning the Prophet's childhood: "I never heard him tell a lie; he never

did the foul acts of the people of the Time of Ignorance, never laughed unfounded, did not play with children, loved loneliness."

3. He was truthful and honest, was never disloyal, nor a deviator from honesty. That is why he was loved and called Amin, the trustworthy. It has been reported that for some time he was a shepherd, too.

4. At the age of 37 his zeal for spiritual retreat (*khalwah*) and meditation grew increasingly. Before receiving the Divine call he spent part of the years praying and pondering at Mount Hira, as if in expectation. He had not yet attained his 38th year of life when a sudden change took place in his life. At nights, he stayed long hours awake and ate little; awake and asleep, he felt someone that he could not see, accompanying him, and calling his name, "O Muhammad." At night, he often had dreams that came true in the day. Finally, he had a dream. Someone came to him and said, "O Messenger of Allah."

5. History books have it that at the time of the Revelation certain states would overcome the holy Prophet (s): he would leave his usual state and drops of sweat would cover his blessed forehead; his body would become heavy, exerting pressure on the animal, if he was riding one.

These are all indications of changes that would occur in his brain carrying him to a different world.

The revelation having ended, he would recite verses of the Qur'an without forgetting anything. The physical marks observed in him are therefore signs of great and profound events in his brain, in step with the activity of neurons or brain cells in particular areas of his brain.

As said before, it is human beings that have the capability to activate their brains to produce dendrites allowing for novel occurrences to enter the brain and move on to faculties of vision, hearing and vocalization; that is, the revealed phenomena are thus translated into speech and action. This process would repeat at each instance the revelation was communicated. It is assigning the brain cells a duty that serves to develop them.

Before the Revelation, other psychic phenomena such as meditation, inspiration, and true visions became apparent in him. This went on until his mind became fully developed and well-disposed to manifest the Revelation and to convey it to people; it started from within and seeped through to teach human beings.

The writer concludes in this way: The Prophet is the person who is the source of all divine blessings, the one whose nerve cells have all been set to operate, upon God Almighty's order, in the direction of his perfection and the guiding of human beings until the world comes to an end."[1]

Answer*:* It is recognized that human beings' brain cells are not identical qualitatively quantitatively; this difference accounts for the difference in their intelligence, perception and memory. It is also a recognized fact that a great portion of brain cells in particular regions have particular learning duties; damage to these cells will impair the

1. Abu Turab Nafisi, *Majmu'a Sukhanraniha wa Maqalat*, The Second conference of Science and Qur'anic Sciences and Concepts, pp. 20-47.

knowledge stored therein. We accept that thinking, perception and memorization of scientific matters affect brain cell chemistry; the reactions in particular brain cells also leave definite effects upon the process of learning. We also accept the reality that the Prophets are superior to ordinary humans, and that through the particular structure of their brains and nerves they have been able to lower the truths and knowledge made known to their innermost self (*dhat*) to the level of perception – in the form of articulated words – and convey them to people. The Prophets ought to enjoy such a capacity and disposition. However, we do not accept that it is the Prophets' brain that is the real abode for the revelation because the revelation is a kind of intuitive knowledge inspired by God to the heart of the Prophet. Books of Islamic philosophy have proved that "knowledge" is not material; it not a property of matter, nor an effect of it. Knowledge - which means: "unveiling", and: "the knowable, *ma'lum*, being present before he who is knowing, *'alim*" - is not compatible with materiality, which entails "absence" and "lack of presence". Therefore, knowledge is truth, light and incorporeal, and the knower who unveils it must also be an immaterial and incorporeal being. To perceive, understand and retain knowledge of the truth is, therefore, a duty of the spirit, which is light and incorporeal.

These scholars do not deny that the senses, nerves and brain are involved in acquiring knowledge and discovering realities. But to them, these are preliminaries to knowledge, not knowledge itself. It is man's incorporeal spirit that discovers "the knowable", retains and

comprehends it after these preliminaries have been fulfilled.

So is with Revelation. To the Prophet, revelation is a kind of knowledge and unveiling of the revealed truths. Therefore, the Prophet's incorporeal soul/spirit, and not his nerves and brain, must be the center and perceivers of the revelation.

Although the nerves and the brain are involved in the process of the conveying and communicating the truths to people, the cerebrum cells are not the center to receive the Revelation, but the Prophet's incorporeal soul.

Revelation is of course basically different from acquired knowledge: Acquired knowledge comes through the senses, even though it is the soul that perceives and retains it. The revealed truths are, on the contrary, primarily suggested to Prophet's fully-illuminated soul, and are then exteriorized through the faculties of perception and senses

Revelation and Inspiration

It is understood from traditions (*ahadith*) – exemplified below - that the Infallible Imams (‘a) enjoyed a kind of knowledge – different from customary knowledge – which was not of the sensory type, but was the result of inner experience and intuitive observation, similar to revelation, but has not been called so.

A. 'Ali b. Yaqtin has quoted his father to have asked Imam Musa ibn Ja'far, (‘a): "How does your knowledge come to

you?" The Imam answered, "Through inspiration into the heart or into the hearing, and sometimes both."[1]

B. Harith b. Muqayra says, "I asked Imam Sadiq (ʿa): "May I be your ransom, if the Imam is asked a question, and he does not have the answer ready, how does he know what to say?" The Imam said, "The answer comes to his heart, or a voice speaks in his ear."[2]

C. Isa says, "I asked Imam Sadiq (ʿa) 'Sometimes I ask you a question, and you answer me immediately; at other times you pause before answering. What is the reason?' The Imam said, "Yes, knowledge of truths is inspired into our ear and heart. When inspiration is quick, we also answer quickly; if inspiration is delayed, we refrain from answering."[3]

D. Yahya says, "I asked Imam Sadiq (ʿa) "How does the Imam answer when he is asked a question?" He said, "He sometimes receives the answer through inspiration, and sometimes he hears it through the ear, and sometimes in both ways."[4]

E. Harith says, "I asked Imam Sadiq (ʿa) 'How is your knowledge acquired? Is it communicated to the heart or to the ear?" The Imam paused a little until others' attention

1. *Musnad al-Imam al-Kazim*, p. 325.
2. *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 26, p. 57.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid, p. 58.

was turned away. He then said, "Sometimes this, and sometimes that."[1]

F. Harith b. Muqayra says: I asked Imam Sadiq (ʿa): Does the knowledge of the one who possesses knowledge, *'alim*, come to him through inspiration made to his heart or to his ear?" He said, "It is revelation, similar to the revelation that came to Moses' mother."[2]

G. Abu Basir says, "I asked Imam Sadiq (ʿa) 'May I be your ransom, could you qualify your knowledge?" The Imam said, "It is something that comes to us subsequent to various events."[3]

H. Harith says, "I heard Imam Sadiqu (ʿa) saying the earth will never be without the *'alim*." I asked him "How does your knowledge come to you? The Imam said, "Through inheritance left for us by the Messenger of God (s) and Ali ibn Abi Talib (ʿa). Thus the Imam feels no need for people's learning, but men are in need of the Imam's knowledge." Then I said, "and as for the divine wisdom, is it inspired to his heart or to his ear?" The Imam said, "this and also that."[4]

I. Mufazzal says, "Imam Sadiq (ʿa) once said to me, "O Aba Abdullah," I said: "Yes, may I be your ransom." He said, "On every Thursday night, there is joy for us." I said, "My lord, may your joy increase; what is that?" The Imam

1. Ibid, p. 58.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid, vol. 26, p. 60.
4. Ibid, p. 62.

said, "Every Thursday night, the Messenger of God (s) ascends to the divine throne, and with him are the Imams, and I am with them too. Then our spirits do not return to our bodies except with the knowledge that I have made use of. If it were not so, our learning would terminate."[1]

J. Yunus has quoted Imam Sadiq (ʿa) to have said, "No Thursday night comes without pleasures for God's *Awliya*." Yunus says, "I asked: May I be your ransom; how do these pleasures come about?" He said, "When Thursday night comes, the Messenger of God (s) ascends to God's empyrean, and I ascend with him too; then I do not return unless with me is knowledge that I am able to apply. If it were not so, our knowledge would terminate."[2]

K. Zurarah says, "I heard Imam Baqir (ʿa) say: The twelve Imams from the House of Muhammad are all authorities in tradition, *muhaddith;* they are descendants of the Messenger of God (s) and of Imam 'Ali (ʿa); the Messenger of God (s) and 'Ali (ʿa) are their fathers."[3]

From these and many other sample traditions, it is understood that the Infallible Imams (ʿa) are endowed with a kind of knowledge that is different from concepts; it has not come to them through the external senses, but some sort of interior experience and sensation suggested to their hearts, or pronounced into their inner ears. This is a definition of the Revelation as has already been explained; but the Imams themselves did not call it revelation. It has

1. Ibid.
2. Ibid, vol. 26, p. 90.
3. Ibid, p. 72.

either been called "inspiration" or identified by Arabic expressions as "*Qadf fi Qulub, Nakt fi Udhun."* The word "revelation", if ever used, has been has been introduced by a descriptive clauses as "like the revelation of Moses' mother" because Muslims commonly hold the belief that "revelation" is restricted to Prophets, and with the Prophet of Islam (s) - the Seal of Prophecy - revelation in its common sense has come to an end too, as Imam Ali (ʿa), has said, "My mother and father be sacrificed for you. With your death were broken the threads of what others' death did not sever: such things as prophecy, communicating of God's commandments and divine messages."[1] Elsewhere he has said, "God sent him as Prophet when some time had passed since former prophets had appeared, and people were fighting against each other. Through him messengership came to an end and the process of the divine revelation was sealed."[2]

Although the nature of the Imam's knowledge is not different from the Prophet's revelation, it is not right to call it revelation because Islam does not prescribe it to. There are two major differences between the Imam's knowledge and the revelation:

First*:* The revelation that came to the Prophet (s) included the Divine decrees and rulings, explanations of what is permitted, *halal*, and what is forbidden, *haram*, and the mission to communicate the same to people. This differs from the knowledge of the Imams which were

1. *Nahj al-Balagha*, sermon 230.
2. Ibid.

clarifications of the ordinances sent to the Prophet (s). Certain traditions have referred to this.

A. Sulayman says, "I said to Imam Sadiq (‘a) May I be your ransom. I have heard you repeatedly saying: ‘Our knowledge would have been exhausted if it had not been augmented.’ The Imam said: ‘As for the permitted and forbidden things in God's Shari'ah, I swear by God that knowledge of these has all been revealed to the Messenger of God (s); nothing more will be added to the Imam's knowledge.’ I said: ‘What other knowledge is added to yours?’ He said: ‘Concerning things other than the permitted and the forbidden.’ I asked: ‘Is anything that was unknown to the Prophet ever made known to you?’ He said: “The knowledge that is supposed to come to us has already been revealed to the Prophet (s) by the angel in this way: ‘O Muhammad, God has said such and such.’ The Messenger of God (s) says: ‘Take it to Ali, too.’ The angel goes to Ali (‘a), and he says: ‘Take it to Hasan, too.’ Hasan (‘a) says: ‘Take it to Husayn.’ This continues until it comes to us.” I asked: ‘Thus, is something that was unknown to the Prophet (s) made known to you?’ He said: ‘Woe upon you! Can the Imam know something of which the Messenger of God and the previous Imam had no knowledge?’”[1]

The one to whom inspiration, *ilham*, has been made is aware of the incoming hints, but at that particular moment is unaware that God Almighty, is the source of the inspiration. It is from the signs and effects that he later on

1. *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 26, p. 92.

knows that the heart-felt inspiration has come from God, and is not a whispering of Satan. Certain *ahadith* have mentioned the same point:

1. Muhammad b. Muslim says, "I asked Imam Sadiq (‘a) for the meaning of *muhaddath*. The Imam said: ‘He hears the angel's voice but does not see him.’ I asked him: ‘How does he know it is the angel's voice?’ The Imam said: ‘Through the tranquility and solemnity he feels in his heart, he recognizes it to be the angel's voice.’"[1]

2. Zurarah says, "I said to Imam Sadiq (‘a): ‘How does he understand it is the angel's voice, and how does he make sure that it is not satanic whisperings, since he does not see the angel?’ The Imam said: ‘Tranquility is produced in his heart; in this way he understands it is the angel's voice. If it were Satan's, confusion would be produced instead. O Zurarah, Satan never bothers the Imam.’"[2]

The important point derived from this *hadith* is: the knowledge and the utmost perfection, that the angel brings to the heart of the living Imam of each era through inspiration, pass through the ranks of *nubuwwat* and *wilayat.*

Second*:* Revelation differs from inspiration in that at the time of receiving the revelation, the Prophet is aware that God Almighty is the source of the Revelation, and He knows that the heart-felt inspirations and visions are from Him; that is why he is particularly serene. With inspiration it is not so: the awareness does not dawn instantly.

1. Ibid, vol. 26, p. 68.
2. Ibid, vol. 26, p. 60.

Mystics' Intuition

True gnostics claim that in certain spiritual states knowledge and truths that are disclosed to them later on prove to be true. Sometimes reports of the past events come to their minds; sometimes they learn about the future occurrences, events and things that are beyond the outward senses. Occasionally, they see things or people and hear voices through media other than the apparent eyes and ears. These reports are basically undeniable by virtue of too many occurrences. Although there might be some deceitful claimants among them, these do not harm the credibility of the idea.

Mystical intuitions likewise are produced through interior experiences, sensations and suggestions made to the heart of the *'arif*, mystic, and are similar to cases of inspiration and revelation. There are however differences:

1. As mentioned before, the recipient of the revelation, at the time he receives the revelation, is fully certain that the revelation is being communicated from God, and is therefore calm and serene. In mystical intuition the *'arif* is not concerned with the source.

2. In mystical intuitions, there is the possibility of error and satanic whispering. Cases of "disclosures" reported from mystics are fanciful, derived from their imagination. This is different from the Prophet's revelations which are secure from any error and mistake.

3. Contrary to mystic disclosures that help in the acquisition of knowledge by the person endowed with the capacity, prophetic revelations contain messages and commands for the propagation of the divine message, and

offer coordinated comprehensive programs for people's welfare.

4. Mystic intuitions are acquired through mortifications and special acts, contrary to revelation that does not need such manners of asceticism, but is spontaneous.

REVELATION FROM CHRISTIAN POINT OF VIEW

There are two entirely different views with regard to the definition of Revelation stated in the book, *Philosophy of Religion:* the propositional and nonpropositional views:

The Propositional view

"The view that dominates the medieval period and that is represented today by more traditional forms of Roman Catholicism (and also, in a curious meeting of opposites, by conservative Protestantism) can be called the "propositional" concept of revelation. According to this view, the content of revelation is a body of truths expressed in statements or propositions. Revelation is the imparting to people of divinely authenticated truths. In the words of the *Catholic Encyclopedia*, 'Revelation may be defined as the communication of some truth by God to a rational creature through means which are beyond the ordinary course of nature.'

"Corresponding to this concept of revelation is faith, whereby people obediently accept these divinely revealed truths. Thus faith was defined by the Vatican Council of l870 as "a supernatural virtue whereby, inspired and assisted by the grace of God, we believe that the things

that He has revealed are true." Or again, a contemporary American Jesuit theologian writes, "To a Catholic, the word 'faith' conveys the notion of an intellectual assent to the content of revelation as true because of the witnessing authority of God the Revealer… Faith is the Catholic's response to an intellectual message communicated by God."[1]

In *Issues in Science and Religion* it is said, "The revealed truths include information, disclosed by God through Christ and the prophets, which have been transmitted through scripture and tradition as preserved by the church."[2]

Besides, *The Bible Dictionary* has said: "God's word was revealed to prophets and messengers who expressed that sacred revelation in human terms and words, and either the prophet or the messenger himself wrote the revelation, or he had it written by a scribe."[3]

This viewpoint considers Jesus (ʻa) a human being born from Mary (ʻa). He is God's servant and His Apostle, who explained God's words to people, and communicated the Torah's laws, as Jesus (ʻa) himself says he did, and the past Christians held to the same belief. Certain verses of the Bible confirm the same point too:

1. Hick, John, *Philosophy of Religion*, third ed., l983, Prentice-Hall Inc.Englewood Cliffs, N.J.
2. *Issues in Science and Religion*, p. 20.
3. Ibid, p. 117.

A. "The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, had glorified His Son, Jesus."[1]

B. "Unto you first, God, having raised his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities."[2]

C. "Jesus (‘a) answered, "What I teach is not my own teaching, but it comes from God who sent me, whoever is willing to do what God wants will know whether what I teach comes from God or whether I speak on my own authority."[3]

D. "The word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's who sent me."[4]

E. "Jesus answered them "What I teach is not my teaching, but it comes from Who sent me."[5]

F. "He that loveth me does not forget my sayings: and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's, Who sent me"[6].

The Nonpropositional View

In Christianity, there is yet another view concerning the reality of revelation; it is entirely different from the first,

1. *Good News Bible*, The act of the Apostle, part 3, verse 13, page 126.
2. Ibid, Act of Apostles, Act 3, verse 14.
3. Ibid, Gospel According to John, chapter 7, verses 17-18.
4. Ibid, p. 115, verse 25.
5. Ibid, chapter 7, verse 17.
6. Ibid, chapter 14, verse 25.

comes from a particular Christology - as is seen in some verses of the Bible. It was promulgated by Paul, who was not a disciple of Jesus (ʿa) and had never met him. According to this view, God manifested Himself in Jesus, and came to human beings in a corporeal body. Whoever sees Jesus has seen God. Jesus is the son of God; God and the son are the same reality. Therefore, Jesus is God's revelation in corporeality.

1. Ian Barbour's *Issues in Science and Religion* makes the following statement: "Barth maintains that the primary revelation was *the person of Christ*, the Word made flesh. Scripture is a purely human record witnessing this revelatory event. God acted in Christ, not in the dictation of an infallible book; hence we can accept everything that historical criticism and documentary analysis discover about the human limitations of the writers of the Bible and the cultural influences on their thought"[1]

2. In his *Philosophy of Religion*, Hick has said: "According to the Reformers of the sixteenth century (Luther and Calvin) the content of revelation is not a body of truths about God, but God coming within the orbit of the human experience by acting in history. From this point of view, theological propositions, as such, are not revealed but represent human attempts to understand the significance of revelatory events."[2]

3. In *Issues in Science and Religion* it is stated: "Luther and even Calvin had been somewhat flexible in biblical

1. *Issues in Science and Religion*, p117.
2. *Philosophy of Religion*, third ed. Prentice-Hall Inc. l983, p.

interpretation. For them, the locus of authority was not the verbal text itself, but the person of Christ to whom scripture pointed. Scripture was important as the witness to redemptive events in which God's love and forgiveness in Christ had been mediated in their personal experience. To the early reformers, the Living Word is confirmed in man's own experience by the Holy Spirit."[1]

4. Elsewhere we read: "God has revealed himself, not in the dictation of an infallible book, but in his presence in the lives of Christ, the prophets, and the people of Israel. Scripture was then not revelation but a human witness to the human experience of revelation."[2]

Elsewhere in the same book, we read: "Revelation occurred in *historic events involving both God and man*. On the human side, these events represent man's experience of God at crucial points in history. On the divine side, they represent God's action in revealing himself to man, taking the initiative in the life of individuals and communities. Human experience and divine self-disclosure are then two sides of the same event".

"In the history of Israel, God was revealed in events and in the prophetic interpretations – for example, a military victory or defeat was seen in relation to God. The Christian community finds God revealed in the career and person of Christ, in which again divine *and* human activity

1. *Issues in Science and Religion*, p. 29.
2. Ibid, p. 104-5.

were combined. Revelation, says Archbishop Temple, occurs in events together with their interpretation."

"In this view the locus of God's action was not the dictation of an inerrant book, or the transmission of infallible doctrines, but *events in the lives of individuals and communities*. The Bible itself is a purely human record about these revelatory events"[1]

To further elucidate the nature of revelation in Christianity, below is a citation from *The Encyclopedia of Religion:*

"Building on the Old Testament understanding of revelation, the New Testament writers view revelation as the self-communication of God in and through Jesus Christ. This communication is regarded as the supreme, final, irrevocable, and unsurpassable self-disclosure of God in history (*Heb.* 1:1f). It is unique because, as Christians understand it, in Jesus of Nazareth, the agent of revelation and content of revelation (the person, teaching, and redemptive work of Jesus) are identical and make up the sole subject of revelation. The theological elaboration is to be found especially in Paul and John:

Paul*:* To express the idea of revelation, Paul uses above all the words *apokaluptein* ("uncover, remove from concealment) and *phaneroun* ("make apparent, show"). His basic theme is the uncovering of the mystery that has previously been hidden and is now made manifest[2].

1. Ibid, p. 229-30.
2. Eph. 1:19 Col. 1:26.

Revelation, therefore, means the uncovering or unveiling of the divine plan by which God reconciles the human race to himself in Christ. Revelation is a divine creative activity, an eschatological saving deed, rather than a simple announcing of messages or items of knowledge. God is the really active one in the process of revelation. It is He Who from eternity decided that in His Son He will turn in love to the human race. The incarnation of his Son in the womb of a woman[1], this Son's expiatory death on the cross and the recapitulation or unification of the cosmos under him as head and firstborn from the dead[2] are the fulfillment of this hidden plan. In this plan Christ himself is what is revealed. The death and resurrection of Christ, and even the church as his body, are elements of this mystery of salvation.

The apostles also reveal the salvific justice of God[3] inasmuch as they proclaim the good news brought by Jesus (2 *Cor.2:14*)."[4]

Revelation In the Bible

We should now refer to the Gospel, the Christians' Scripture, for a better understanding of the idea of revelation.

1. Gal. 4:44.
2. Rom. 3:25, Col. 1:18.
3. Rom. 1:17.
4. *The Encyclopedia of Religion*.

Jesus from the Bible Viewpoint

A. In the Bible it is written: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that was made; not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth."[1]

B. "Christ… Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: for by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or power: all things were created by him, and for him: and he is before all things, and by him all things consist."[2]

C. "Believe in works: that ye may know, and believe that Father is in me, and I in Him."[3]

D. "I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: again I leave the world, and go to the Father."[4]

E. "...to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things. and we in Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him."[5]

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1. *The Gospel according to St. John*, 16:28.
2. *The Epistle of Paul to the Colossians*, chapter one, verses 16-17.
3. *The Gospel according to John*, chapter 10, verse 39.
4. Ibid, 16:28.
5. *The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians*, Chapter 8, verse 7.

F. "For unto which of the angels said He at any time, Thou art my Son, This day have I begotten thee? And again, I will be to him a Father, And he shall be to me a Son?"[1]

G. "Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."[2]

H. "I and my Father are one."[3]

I. "And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."[4]

J. "Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God."[5]

K. "I and *my* Father are one."[6]

L. "Philips saith unto him, Lord, show us the Father and it sufficeth us."

"Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father? Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father is in me?"[7]

M. *The Dictionary of the Holy Scripture* contains: "By the word 'Our Lord' it means Jesus Christ."[8]

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1. *The Epistle of Paul to the Hebrews*, Chapter 1, verse 5.
2. *The Gospel according to Mathew*, 16:17.
3. *The Gospel according to John*, 10:30.
4. *The Gospel according to Mathew*, 15:17.
5. *The First Epistle of Paul to Corinthians*, verse 25.
6. *The Gospel according to John*, 10:31.
7. Ibid, 14-18.
8. *Dictionary of the Bible*, the entry "Word".

Why Jesus Was Created and Sent

The Bible has mentioned two purposes as to why Jesus was created and sent:

First: Making him known

A. "To whom God would make known the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory."[1]

B. "No man hath seen the Father, save he who is of God; he hath seen the Father."[2]

C. "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he had declared him."[3]

Second: A means to propitiate Christians' sins

A. "…He (God) loved us and sent his Son to be the means by which our sins are forgiven."[4]

B. "But if we walk in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin."[5]

C. "Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life, a ransom for many."[6]

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1. *The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians*, Chapter 1, verse 28.
2. *The Gospel According to John*, Chapter 6, verse 48.
3. Ibid, 1:18.
4. The First Epistle General of John, Chapter 4 verse 10, Good News Bible, l976, p. 327.
5. Ibid, chapter 1, verse 8, page 237.
6. The Gospel according to Mathew, 20:28.

D. "If God *be* for us, who *can* be against us? He that spared not His own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall He not with him, also freely give us all things? "[1]

E. "For God so loved the world, that he gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved."[2]

F. "I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world."[3]

The Descent of the Holy Spirit

Jesus' Prophethood began with the descent of the Holy Ghost:

A. "Now when all the people were baptized, it came to pass, that Jesus was also being baptized, and praying, the heaven was opened, and the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him and a voice came from heaven, which said, Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased."[4]

1. The Epistle of Paul to the Romans, Chapter 8, verses 31-32.
2. The Gospel according to John 3:16-17.
3. Ibid, verses 17-18.
4. *The Gospel according to Luke*, 3:21-22.

B. "And it came to pass in those days, that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized by John in Jordan. And straightaway coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens opened, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon him: and there came a voice from heaven, saying, Thou art my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased."[1]

C. "And John said, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him. And I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom, thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost, and I saw, and he bore record that this is the Son of God."[2]

D. "For he received from God, the Father, honor and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount."[3]

E. "And there appeared unto him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense. And when Zacharias saw him, he was troubled, and fear fell upon him. But the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard…. And answering, said unto him, I am Gabriel, I stand in the presence of God; and

1. *The Gospel according to Mark*, Chapter 1, verses 9-11.
2. *The Gospel according to John*, Chapter 1, verses 33-35.
3. *The Second Epistle General of Peter*, Chapter one, verses 18 and 19.

am sent to speak unto thee, and to shew thee these glad tidings."[1]

F. "And in the sixth month, the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth."[2]

G. "And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God."[3]

Jesus Heard God's Word, and Taught it to People

A. "Then said Jesus unto them, When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am he, and that I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things."[4]

B. "He, who is of God, hears God's words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God."[5]

C. "The words that I speak unto you, I speak not of myself, but the Father that dwelleth in me; He doeth the words. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me."[6]

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1. *The Gospel according to Luke*, Chapter one, verses 11-19.
2. Ibid, verse 27.
3. Ibid, verse 36.
4. *The Gospel according to John*, Chapter 9, verse 28.
5. Ibid, Chapter 8, verse 48.
6. Ibid, Chapter 14, verses 11-12.

D. "God, who at sundry times and in diverse manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us through His Son, whom He hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also He made the worlds; who being the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high."[1]

Revelation from the viewpoint of the author of the Bible Dictionary

The author of *The Bible Dictionary* has taken "the Revelation" to mean "inspiration", and holds that revelation has come even to the authors of the Gospels, and that those books are all God's inspirations:

A. "Revelation generally means inspiration" (Ezekiel, Chapter 13, verse 16; Malachi, chapter one verses 1-2; Paul's; The Epistle of Paul to the Romans, verses 4 and 5). Thus, it is said: "These books are all God's inspiration (The Second Epistle of Paul to Tymotauls, Chapter three, verses 16-16).

B. Taken in this sense, revelation is the infusion of the divine Spirit in the authors; it is divided into several kinds: The first type conveys to them certain spiritual truths and future events. This will never be possible for them without inspiration. The second type guides them to write the known events and the realities - as have been determined-

1. *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, Chapter 1, verses 1-4.

in a book in a language that is secure from error; this is evidenced by the second Epistle of Paul, chapter one, verse 21: the holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."

It is evident that in such a state the speaker has not had himself in mind, but the Holy Ghost has influenced him; that person has been using all his concealed attributes and qualities in accord with the guidance and majesty of the Divine Spirit. For this reason, in each of the honored writers of the Holy Book, a particular natural gift and a style of writing is observed; and scholars have differed in explaining the above matter; but most Christians hold that God, the Almighty, has inspired the authors and compilers of the Holy Book to record His Exalted Will in the scripture for the eternal benefit, faith and salvation of humankind in a manner free from mistake, error and oblivion."[1]

C. Also, under the term "the Holy Book" the same book has made the following point: "The purport of all revealed books is to talk about the creation of the world, sacrifice, sanctification, and God's relation to human beings, and all future tidings and religious advice that are and necessary for every class of mankind at any time and any place. The inspired writers are forty in number, from all classes of mankind: shepherds, commanders and monarchs, who lived in the span of one thousand and six hundred years, and were all from the Hebrew clan except, for Luke, who

1. *Dictionary of the Bible.*

got his Gospel from Jewish sources and wrote it, and was known as a companion of Paul."[1]

D. The above book has also said, "God's word was sent to prophets and messengers, who spoke that sacred revelation in human terms and words; and either the prophet or the messenger himself wrote the revelation, or he had it written by a scribe."[2]

E. "By revelation is meant disclosure and unveiling on God's part; it is the effect of a supernatural disclosure from God's side working on the intellect of the scribes of the Bible so that without error and forgetfulness they could mention the most sacred will of the Divine."[3]

As can be seen, the author of the Bible Dictionary has pieced two ideas (the propositional and nonpropositional views) together. On the one hand he has taken "the Revelation" to mean "inspiration", and has considered all the Gospels as God's inspiration; on the other, he has considered the revelation as the infusion of the divine Spirit and the Holy Ghost in the authors of the Gospels.

Summary

The Christians' view with regard to Revelation is summarized below:

1. Jesus*:* He is God's Word, the unveiling of God's essence, and the mystery of his life is the incarnated Word

1. Ibid, p. 718.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid, under the entry 'The revelation".

of God. He has always been with God, nay, the same as he, and has been involved in the creation of the world. The Most Divine Majesty has manifested and infused in him, and has chosen him as His only Son and sent him to men as His only Son in a corporeal body – the Father and the Son are one truth. Whoever sees and knows Jesus has seen God. In God and His essential Word, which is the Son, there subsists an inherent life identical with their spirit, and it is the Holy Ghost.

2. The Revelation*:* does not mean God's message; it does not mean the conveying of the message by Jesus either, but it means manifestation and infusion of the Divine Essence in Jesus, and a descent for humans. In the Christian revelation, God Himself came down to people incarnated in Jesus' body, and by "God's Word" it is meant "manifestation in Jesus" and "emergence" to people. It is through His miracles and extraordinary works that Jesus gives the news concerning God and discloses Him. In short, Jesus is God's revelation corporealized; his acts and his word are God's word; he is not the bearer of Messengership.

3. There are two purposes in the Christian Revelation*:* The first purpose is to disclose the Divine mystery and epiphany, and the emergence of the most sacred essence of God in the being of Jesus.

The second purpose is the salvation of human beings and forgiveness of their sins achieved by Jesus being sacrificed and by his suffering death on the cross.

This is the summary of the Christians' nonpropositional view with regard to revelation which is based on accepting

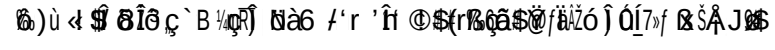
divinity for Christ as the initial verses in John's Gospel and epistles of the New Testament indicate. Paul, who was not a Disciple and had never met Christ, did his most in spreading and propagating this type of Christology to the extent that he is recognized as the second personality in Christianity and the founder figure of the divine Christology.

And this is Trinity, belief in the unity of God, Christ and the Holy Gospel, also called the unity of the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost.

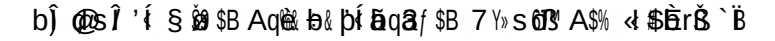
For Christianity, Trinity has turned into a scientific-ideological problem whose contradictory points the Christians are unable to comment and answer logically and understandably. It is a problem whose criticism and investigation is unrelated with our discussion.

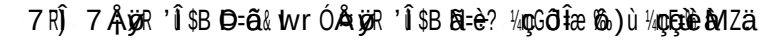
Jesus in the Qur'an

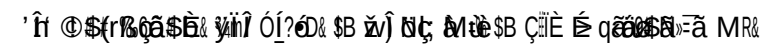
The holy Qur'an considers Isa (ʿa) a human born of Mary (ʿa) through miracle, without father, being appointed as a prophet to guide people, and like other prophets, related to the Lord of the worlds, received truths and conveyed them to people. He was not God; he was not the Son of God either, but he was a servant of God. If he is sometimes introduced in the Bible as the Son, this must be taken as ceremonious, and he is addressed as the Word, it is because he has come into existence by the creative word *be*, without a father. The Qur'an calls the belief in Trinity as polytheism and disbelief, which Jesus himself shunned.



Certainly they disbelieve who say: Surely Allah, He is the Messiah, son of Marium; and the Messiah said: O Children of Israel! Serve Allah, my Lord and your Lord. Surely whoever associates (others) with Allah, then Allah has forbidden to him the garden, and his abode is the fire; and there shall be no helpers for the unjust. Certainly they disbelieve who say: Surely Allah is the third (person) of the three; and there is no god but the one God. (5:72-3)



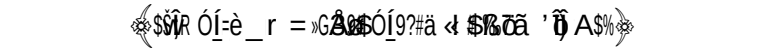




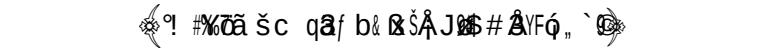
And when Allah will say: O Isa son of Marium! Did you say to men, Take me and my mother for two gods besides Allah, he will say: Glory be to Thee, it did not befit me that I should say what I had no right to (say); if I had said, it Thou wouldst indeed have known it; Thou knowest what is in my mind, and I do not know what is in Thy mind,

surely Thou art the great knower of the unseen things. I did not say to them aught save what Thou didst enjoin me with: to serve Allah, my Lord and their Lord. (5:116-7)

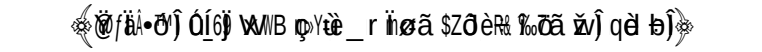
Jesus (‘a) used to introduce himself as a servant of God the Mighty and High and a Prophet:



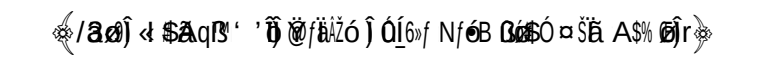
He said: Surely I am a servant of Allah; He has given me the Book and made me a Prophet. (19:30)



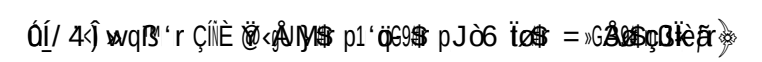
The Messiah does by no means disdain that he should be a servant of Allah. (4:172)



He was naught but a servant on whom We bestowed favor, and We made him an example for the children of Israel. (43:59)



And when Isa son of Marium said: O children of Israel! Surely I am the apostle of Allah to you. (61:6)



And He will teach the Book and the wisdom and the Tavrat and the Injeel. And (make) him an apostle to the children of Israel. (3:48-9)

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And a verifier of that which is before me of the Tavrat, and that I may allow you part of that which has been forbidden you. (3:48)

Jesus (‘a) considered himself similar to other servants of God, the Mighty and High for whom there is a life, death and resurrection:

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And peace on me on the day I was born, and on the day I die, and on the day I am raised to life. (19:34)

The holy Qur'an declares that with God's permission Jesus (‘a) has the power to work miracles:

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I heal the blind and the leprous, and bring the dead to life with Allah's permission and I inform you of what you eat and what you store in your houses. (3:49)

He is regarded as the Word of God created without a father and a being particularly created:

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Surely the likeness of Isa is with Allah as the likeness of Adam; He created him from dust, then said to him, Be, and he was. (3:59)

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Surely Allah gives you good news with a Word from Him (of one) whose name is the Messiah, Isa son of Marium. (3:45)

REVELATION IN THE OLD TESTAMENT, WITH THE JEWS

The word "revelation" has been used in the Old Testament many times, samples of which are:

A. "…the word of the Lord for Israel, saith the Lord, which stretches for the heaven, and layeth the foundation of the earth, and formeth the spirit of man within him."[1]

B. "This is the message that the Lord gave Malachi to tell the people of Israel."

"The Lord says to his people, "I have always loved you." But they reply, "How have you shown your love for us."[2]

C. "This is a message about Nineveh, the account of a vision seen by Nahum, who was from Elkosh: The Lord God tolerates no rivals; he punishes those who oppose him"[3]

D. "The Lord said, "Damascus will not be a city any longer; it will be only a pile of ruins"[4]

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1. The Old Testament, Zechariah, 12, verse 1.
2. Isaiah, Chapter 19, verse 1.
3. Malachi, Chapter 1, verses 1-2.
4. Isaiah, Chapter 17, verse 1.

E. "This is a message about Egypt. The LORD is coming to Egypt, riding swiftly on a cloud. The Egyptian idols tremble before him, and the people of Egypt lose their courage."[1]

F. "The burden of Moab: Because in the night Ar of Moab is laid waste, *and* brought to silence; because in the night Kir of Moab is laid waste, *and* brought to silence."[2]

G. "This is a message about Tyre. Howl ye ship of Tarnish; for it is laid waste, so that there is no house, no entering it;"[3]

H. "For remember how that, when I and thou rode together after Ahab his father, the LORD laid this burden upon him; Surely I have seen yesterday the blood of Naboth, and the blood of his sons, saith the LORD; and I will requite thee in this plat, saith the LORD. Now therefore take *and* cast him into the plat of *ground*, according to the word of the LORD."[4]

Verbal Revelation

From uncertain verses of the Old Testament, it is understood that the divine revelation communicated to Moses (ʿa) and other Prophets has been verbal; such expressions as: The Almighty: God's word, God said, God spoke, God says, hear God's word, God's word came to

1. Ibid, chapter 19, verse 1.
2. Ibid, Chapter 15, verse 1.
3. Ibid, chapter 23, verse 1.
4. 2 kings, chapter 9, verses 25 through 27.

me, God addressed Moses, I will speak to you, and other similar expressions have often been used:

A. "And your Lord spoke unto you out of the midst of the fire: yet you heard the voice of the words, but saw no similitude; only *ye heard* a voice."[1]

B. "God called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, 'Moses, Moses.' And he said, 'Here I am.' And he said, 'Draw not nigh thither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground.' Moreover, he said, 'I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.' And Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God."[2]

C. "This is the Lord's message: He has decreed punishment for the land of Hadrach and for city of Damascus."[3]

D. " And God spake unto Moses, and said unto him, I am the LORD: and I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by the name of God Almighty, but by my name JEHOVAH was I not known to them.[4]

E. "And there I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubims which are upon the ark of the testimony, of

1. Deuteronomy, Chapter 4, verse 13.
2. The Bible, Authorized Version, l964; Exodus, chapter 4, verses 4-5.
3. Zachariah, Chapter 9, verse 10.
4. Exodus, chapter 6, verse 2-3.

all things which I will give thee in commandment unto the children of Israel."[1]

F. "And the LORD said unto Moses, 'Gather unto me seventy men of the elders of Israel, whom thou knowest to be the elders of people, and officers over them.'"[2]

G. 'The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying "Hear ye the words of this covenant, and speak unto the men of Judah, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem."'[3]

H. "I felt the powerful presence of the Lord and heard him say to me, 'Get up and go out into the valley. I will talk to you there.'"[4]

And hundreds of such verses show that the divine revelation communicated to Moses was in spoken form.

In *Everyman's Talmud*, it is written: "This is the basis of Jewish scholars: God has informed mankind of His will through his spokesmen, who are called prophets."[5]

The Angel of Revelation

In some verses of the Torah, mention has been made of the angel of revelation:

1. Ibid, chapter 25, verse 23.
2. Numbers, Chapter 11, verse 17.
3. Jeremiah, chapter 11, verses 1-2.
4. Ezekil, 3, 23.
5. Everyman's Talmud, chapter 4.

A. "The angel who had been speaking to me came again and roused me as if I had been sleeping…. And so I answered and spake to the angel that talked with me, saying, 'Knowest thou not what these be?' And I said, 'No, my lord.' Then he answered and spake unto me, saying, 'This is the word of the LORD unto Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit.'"[1]

B. "My angel will go ahead of you and take you into the land of Amorites, the Hittitesm, the Perizzites, the Cannaites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, and I will destroy them."[2]

C. "May the angel who rescued me from all harm, bless them."[3]

D. "And it came to pass, when I, *even* I, Daniel, had seen the vision, and sought for the meaning, then behold, there stood before me the appearance of a man. And I heard a man's voice between *the banks of* Ulai, which called, and said, 'Gabriel, make this *man* to understand the vision.'"[4]

E. "While I was praying, Gabriel, whom I had seen in the earlier vision, came flying down to where I was. It was the time for the evening sacrifice to be offered. He explained. "Daniel, I have come here to help you understand the prophecy."[5]

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1. Ibid.
2. Exodus, chapter 23, verse 23.
3. Genesis, chapter 48, verse 17.
4. Daniel, chapter 8, verses 15-16.
5. Daniel, 9; 22-23.

Purposes of the Revelation in the Old Testament

In the Old Testament, revelation serves two purposes, *first:* informing people of the statues and duties of the Law, *shari'ah*, *second:* rescuing Bani-Israel from Pharaoh and Pharaonic ones.

1. "Now therefore hearken, O Israel, unto the statutes and unto the judgments, which I teach you to implement, that ye may live, and go in and possess the land which the LORD God of your fathers giveth you. You shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall yet diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the LORD God which I command you."[1]

2. "Behold, I have taught you statutes and judgments, even as the LORD my God commanded me that ye should do so in the land whither ye go to possess it."[2]

3. "And He declared unto you His covenant, which He commanded you to perform, even ten commandments; and He wrote them upon two tables of stone. And the LORD commanded me at that time to teach you statutes and judgments, that ye might implement them in the land whither ye go to possess it."[3]

4. "Then the LORD said, "I have seen how cruelly my people are being treated in Egypt; I have heard them cry out to be rescued from their slave drivers. I know all about

1. Deuteronomy, Chapter 4, verses 1-2.
2. Ibid, verse 5.
3. Deuteronomy, Chapter 4, verse 13.

their sufferings, and so I have come down to rescue them from the Egyptians."[1]

5. "The Spirit of the Lord GOD *is* upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted."[2]

Manner of the Revelation in the Old Testament

In describing the manner of the revelation, the Old Testament's use of such phrases as "epiphany of God" and "unveiling of God" are notable:

A. "The mighty God, *even* the LORD, hath spoken, and called the earth from the rising of the sun unto its going down. Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God shall shine. Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence"[3]

B. "Now the LORD had told Samuel … a day before Samuel came, saying, "Tomorrow about this time I will send thee a man out of the land of Benjamin, and thou shalt anoint him *to be* captain over my people of Israel."[4]

C. "Behold, the Lord God will come with a strong *hand*, and his arm shall rule for him: behold his reward *is* with him, and his work before him."[5]

1. Exodus. 2, 7-8.
2. Isaiah, 61-1.
3. Psalm 50, verses 1-3.
4. 1 Samuel, Chapter 9 verse 16.
5. Isaiah, Chapter 40, verse 10.

D. "And, behold, the LORD stood above it, and said, I *am* the LORD God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac."[1]

E. "The power of the Lord was upon me and I was carried away by the Spirit of the Lord to a valley full of old, dry bones."[2]

F. "And he built there an altar, and called the place El-bethel: because there God appeared unto him."[3]

From certain verses it is understood that God makes the revelation pass on the tongue of the Prophet and speaks through his tongue:

G. God told Moses "And thou shalt speak unto him, and put words in his mouth: and I will be with thy mouth, and with his mouth, and will teach you what ye shall do"[4]

H. "The Spirit of the Lord spoke by me, and his word *was* in my tongue"[5]

I. "And the Lord said unto me, They have spoken well that which they have spoken. I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him."[6]

1. Ezekiel, chapter 37, verse 7.
2. ibid, chapter 37m, verse 1.
3. Genesis, Chapter 35, verse 7.
4. Exodus, Chapter 4, verse 15.
5. The Second Book of Samuel, Chapter 23, verse 7.
6. Deuteronomy, Chapter 18, verses 17-18.

J. "Then the LORD said unto me, 'Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth.'"[1]

Extraordinary Events at the time of Revelation

It is understood from certain verses of the Holy Scripture that extraordinary events happened at the time of the revelation:

A. "All the people saw the lightning and the smoke billowing from the mountain, and heard the thunder and the long, frightening trumpet blast; and they stood at a distance, shaking with fear. They said to Moses, 'You tell us what God says and we will obey, but don't let God speak directly to us, or it will kill us.'"[2]

B. "And it came to pass on the third day in the morning, that there was thunder and lightning, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud, so that all the people that *were* in the camp trembled.

"And Moses brought forth the people out of the camp to meet with God; and they stood at the nether part of the mountain.

"And the mount Sinai was altogether in smoke, because the LORD descended upon it in fire: and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly."[3]

1. Jeremiah, part 1, verse 10.
2. Exodus, Chapter 20, verses 18-19.
3. Ibid, chapter 19, verses 17-19.

Worthiness, A Condition for the communication of Revelation

In *Everyman's Talmud* it is written: A theory confirmed by Jewish philosophers of the succeeding periods has it that prophet hood is not a gift arbitrarily given from God to a number of people. It is, rather, the utmost intellectual and mental readiness a human being can attain.[1]

According to *Talmud* various steps in attaining the rank of prophet hood are:

A. Ingenuity, which brings cleanliness; cleanliness, which brings purity; purity ends in abstinence; abstinence grants one holiness; holiness makes one humble; humbleness encourages the fear of sins; fear of sins is a cause for piety and religiosity; and religiosity gives one the holy spirit. *Mishna,* 9:15

B. Besides the above moral qualities, the further conditions for attaining prophet hood are: the Holy Essence does not lower his *Schechina* except on a courageous, wealthy, wise, and humble person.

C. "The Schechina rests only on a wise man, a strong man, a wealthy and a tall man." *92-A*[2]

D. Deviation from moral perfections deprives one from the gift of prophet hood, forever or temporarily.

1. Everyman's Talmud,, Chapter 4.
2. The Babylonian Talmud, Shabbath 92a, p. 44, Translated into English by H. Freedman.

E. "Whoever is boastful, if he is a prophet, his prophet hood departs from him; and if he is angry he prophet hood will depart from him too." (*Pesahim* 66b)[1]

Revelation and Prophecy Among Heathens

Talmud says: "Because Israelis have been trusted with the safe-keeping of the divine revelation, certain people among them have been chosen as God's prophets. But this was not limited to these people. "Seven prophets guided the heathens, namely, Balaam and his father, Job, and his four associates."[2]

God's justice demanded that there should be prophets and spokesmen among the heathens too. The verse: "God… his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment"[3] has been interpreted by Midrash in this way: The Holy Essence left no room for nations to tell Him in the next world: Thou has kept us away. What did He do? Just as He had raised kings, sages, and prophets for Israelites, He chose like people for other nations. In the same manner that He had appointed Moses to Israel, He appointed Balaam as the prophet to the heathens so he might guide them to the straight path.[4]

But it has never been assumed that divine revelation has come to the heathens' and Jews' prophets in the same degree. The Jewish prophets enjoyed a higher degree of

1. ibid, Baba Bathra, 15b, p. 332.
2. Ibid.
3. Deuteronomy; 32, Songs of Moses, 4.
4. Bemedebar Raba.

moral virtue, and their prophet hood ranked higher accordingly.

In the Torah, it has been said: "But God came to Abimelech – king of Gerar – in a dream by night."[1] It is, therefore, concluded: The Holy Essence manifests Himself to the heathens' prophets only at hours when people disperse. What difference is there between Israelite prophets and the heathens' prophets? Parable: A king sits in a porch with his friend, and a curtain separates them. Whenever the king wanted to talk to his friend, he would pull the curtain aside and talk to him. God would speak to Israelite prophets in this way – uncovered and manifest. But when he wanted to speak to the heathens' prophets, he would not pull the curtain aside, but would talk to them from behind the curtain.

Moses is greater than all prophets, and has a position particular to himself. What difference was there between Moses and other prophets? Other prophets saw the light of the divine glory from behind Specularia, nine cups, whereas Moses saw it from behind just one cup. Other prophets saw it through a dim glass, whereas Moses saw it through a clear glass.[2] As a result, Moses used to apprehend the divine message more than other prophets, and he was nearer to the divine than others.[3]

1. Genesis 20:3.
2. Vayigra' Rabbah.
3. Everyman's Talmud, chapter 4.

REVELATION AND INTELLECT

In closing the issues concerning Revelation, I consider it proper to initiate a short discussion on intellect and revelation, review the proofs on the extent of validity of each, and go through the probable contradictions between intellectual statements and propositions on the one hand and revelatory texts on the other. To achieve the intended aim, the following topics will be examined:

Definition of Intellect

Intellect is a particular instinct and power that distinguishes man from other animals. Comprehension of truths, contemplation, presentation of proofs, and affirmation of statements and propositions come from this particular power. All sound people are endowed with it, but not equally – in some, it is stronger; in others, it is weaker. Intellect, aql, is sometimes used to describe man's soul and spirit because the soul has such a power.

Showing the Reality; Functions of the Intellect

Intellect serves to perceive and understand; through the application of the five senses: hearing, sight, touch, taste and smell, it can well appreciate and perceive what can be heard, seen, touched, tasted and smelled. Maintaining and remembering the detailed forms and meanings and

manipulating them are also done by the forces of the soul whose further job is to abstract generals from particulars and understand them.

The most important function of intellect is reflection, that is: to arrange the propositions in the order of syllogism, conclusion, conception, affirmation and judgment.

Self-Evident and Speculative Propositions

By "self-evident" is meant those propositions concerning which the intellect pronounces judgments without the need for argumentations, such as: the co-existence of two contraries, and negation of two contradictories are impossible; the whole is greater than its parts, quantities equating one are themselves equal with each other. No created thing, *hadith*, is produced without a cause; there must necessarily be a general cognation between the cause and effect. Such statements are called "self-evident". The intellect gives testimony to their validity; they have no need for proofs. In such cases, the conceptual framing of subject and predicate always produces affirmation.

Speculative

By "Speculative" is meant the statements requiring the order of syllogism – argumentation when a predicate is to be ascribed to the subject. While reasoning, the intellect derives the rule of the particular from the general. For example, in proving newness/contingency for the world, the intellect proceeds in this way: the world of matter is subject to change; every change is new, therefore, the world is *hadith*, new. A universal premise results only if the judgment made concerning it is definite and certain: it

should be definite *per se* or should have been inferred from an apodeictic proposition. It will however end in a statement that is certain.

Therefore, all speculative propositions end in self-evident propositions. That the co-existence of two contraries and the negation of two contradictories are impossible forms the fundamental basis of all propositions. For example, in the above case, the concluding statement: "the world is contingent" will result when we have already accepted that that co-presence of "contingency" and "non-contingency" is impossible. If anyone says that the world may be "created" and "uncreated" the outcome of such a statement will not be valid.

Experimental Sciences Come to a Standstill in Self-Evident Propositions

Even physical and experimental propositions produce conclusions only when they are based on rational and self-evident statements. How can an experimental scientist continue with his tests, and what purpose will he be following if he does not accept the general law of causality and stick to the probability of coincidence instead? Will he gain anything if he does not acknowledge the self-evident statement of the impossibility of the co-existence of two contraries?

If the universal rules of cause and effect, the necessity of cognation between the cause and effect, and the impossibility of co-presence of two contraries are not recognized as clear and self-evident bases, then all sciences and tests, even the experimental sciences will be baseless and barren, because the universal rules of cause

and effect, the impossibility of coincidence, and cognation between the cause and effect cannot be proved through experiments.

If doubt could find a way into self-evident statements, we would then have to call all rational and experimental propositions that are based on these statements as doubtful, and fall headlong into the pitch-black and horrible abyss of doubting the doubt. If our sciences are not based on sound and valid foundations, no knowledge will ever exist. Men of intellect will have to accept without questioning the self-evident propositions as definite rational statements and apply these definite presuppositions in discovering the theoretical unknown problems.

Intellectualists hold that by virtue of syllogism and rational proofs and by referring to the self-evident propositions it is possible to infer and unveil the theoretical unknowns and arrive at definite knowledge. This is how they interpret "intellectualism."

Rationality is not Secure from Error

It should be mentioned that while the men of intellect take rationality as able to disclose the reality, they do not consider it protected from error; rather they take it to be prone to error. That is why they recommend that rules of logic be strictly observed in the formation of deductions by analogy and presentation of proofs. They do not say that all rational inferences are hundred percent correct and should be indubitably accepted. But they advise that these should be criticized correctly and in a well-reasoned manner. A critique could go even as far as examining the

nature of the intellect and the scope of its function, and refute and reject the whole thing if he does not come across valid and convincing answers.

In all these, however, there is no escape but to resort to sound demonstrative proofs and yield to them. A ruling of judgment is considered authoritative and disclosing only after the intellect has observed the criteria of logic fully and meticulously, has reviewed the preliminaries and presuppositions and confirmed that these have been sound. Such a ruling cannot be doubted without invoking demonstrative proof. That the rulings of intellect are authoritative is natural and needs no proof.

The primary characteristic inherent in "the intellect" is its ability to disclose reality. This ability, if ever doubted, will equal doubting the self-evident statements, and this is what man has accepted from the onset of his life through history. All developments in sciences, skills, industries, philosophy and mathematics are indebted to man's having surrendered to this particular conclusion. Can mankind live a scientific life and continue it without having trust in reasoning?

Reason Supports the Revelation

In previous discussions it was proved that man's knowledge is wholly founded on reasoning, on demonstrative proofs and ultimately on self-evident propositions. In other words man's day-to-day life is established on sound reasoning without which man's life will be totally void. Revelation is one of the manifestations based on intellect. If the existence of the Creator of the world, His attributes of Beauty and Majesty, the necessity

of purpose in His creating human beings and the universe, immateriality and immortality of the soul, the necessity of the resurrection, the Day of Judgment, reward and punishment for man in the Hereafter, and the necessity of sending of prophets to guide men in securing happiness in this world and the next had not been logically demonstrated, the Revelation would not have had a firm position.

Thus, faculty of reasoning, *aql*, and rationality are the best supports for the revelation and precede it. It is *aql* that gives the revelation legitimacy introducing it as phenomenon that discloses reality, and is a valid proof, too.

Revelation, too, confirms the intellect's potentiality to reveal and present the reality, introduces it as an esoteric proof, *hujjaht-i batini*, and invites people to follow the guidance of rationality. The holy Qur'an in scores of verses invites people to apply their faculty of reasoning, to meditate, and think, and blames those who do not do so, calling them blind, deaf, and inferior to animals. Multitudes of Traditions, *ahadith*, have clearly stated this same point.

The holy Qur'an, the Prophet of Islam (s) and the Infallible Imams (‘a) have in practice emphasized the need of applying the faculty of reasoning and rational proofs, and have themselves translated both into action.

Is There Discordance Between the Intellect and Revelation?

In the place where it descends, that is, the Prophet's fully-illuminated heart, Revelation fully presents the truth.

There is no doubt about this because it is a kind of immediate knowledge and a vision of realities. In addition, theological books have proved that in the process of receiving the truths and conveying them to people the prophet is divinely protected against any error and mistake. If it had not been so, Revelation would not have been communicated and Prophets would not have been sent either.

Discordance, if any, might be between the intellect, the transmitted words from the prophet and the revelatory texts – or as some people might claim between the oral and recorded Qur'an and *ahadith* books. Below, we will review the issue in detail:

Division of the Revelatory Texts

The First are the texts with the following particularities:

i) Indisputable evidence proving that these are the Prophet's words.

ii) It has been established that they have been revealed.

iii) What they indicate should be certain.

Because the Prophet (s) is Infallible, such a text is indubitable and truth-presenting; no rational judgment counters it so as to raise the likelihood of discordance, and a careful examination of the Qur'an and the *ahadith* books proves this reality.

If there is an event in which one or more of the above-mentioned possibilities are not met, either the preliminaries of the intellectual judgment or the specific

historical incident related with the revelation should be critically reviewed

The Second type are the revelatory texts that may or may not have come from the prophet, or those texts whose significations are inconclusive, but whose content concerns practical wisdom, such as: ordinances and duties prescribed by Divine Law, *shari'a,* and cases of moral "must" and "must not", as well as those pertaining to rights. If the chain of transmitters of these *ahadith* are valid and trustworthy as the science of *hadith* has prescribed, these texts will be legal proofs, and should be followed by those who are legally responsible. Rules determine the particularized or generalized applications of these texts.

It might be possible to leave these texts aside if there is strict rational evidence counting against them. But such proofs are often very unlikely to exist because conceptual intellect, *aql-i nazari*, is often ineffective in this field. Legal discretions, *istihsan,* and improbabilities stemming from one's own desire cannot be the ground to leave legally valid proofs or to offer justifications and interpretations.

The Third type is related to the inconclusive tests conducted in natural sciences like: articles of food, geology, zoology, botany, astronomy, or humanities including: sociology, psychology, education, medicine, health care, and history which are no more valid than a presumptive proof. It is possible to leave or justify any one of these if there is definite conclusive or experimental evidence to count against it. In case the opposing argument is itself presumptive and neither is preferred

over the other, it will be necessary to look forward to more definite scientific results. These presumptive guesses should neither be attributed to Islam with certainty, nor should be falsified just because there is an opposing scientific theorem.

The Fourth type includes non-conclusive texts pertaining to articles of belief. These are no more valid than a presumptive guess either and can be used merely as a rational guidance, and taken as doubtful idea. In case of a definite opposing argument, one might either justify or refute them. In case the opposing argument is itself presumptive, contradiction will emerge, and as a result neither can one be given primacy over the other.

The Fifth type includes the texts with definite sources but uncertain indications. We hold on to the apparent sense of these texts and act accordingly as long as there is no definite rational or scientific proof. But if there are definite opposite arguments, we will set the apparent aspect of these *ahadith* aside and justify and interpret them. In case the opposing idea is presumptive, there will be contradiction, and there is no reason to prefer one over the other.

Scope of the revelation and Intellect

There is no doubt about the intellect's potentiality to reveal and present the reality: in acquiring knowledge, human beings have no choice but to benefit from the intellect; in experimental sciences they have to take advantage of some rational propositions; followers of heavenly religions too have accepted the revelation as a disclosing phenomenon,

and philosophy and theology books have proved the need for the revelation, too.

The questions that are now asked concern the real position and scope of the activity of the revelation and the intellect: What matters has the revelation undertaken, and what is it expected to achieve? What matters is the intellect assigned to judge? There are two entirely different viewpoints:

The first viewpoint holds that in all dimensions of life: ideological and ethical, spiritual and devotional, political and social, mundane and otherworldly, men are in need of guidance from God, the Almighty. God, the All-Wise has granted this request, and in the course of history has sent human beings necessary teachings to the amount they need through prophets. In the time of the Prophet of Islam (s), because the human being's life had developed God sent them more exalted teachings, loftier ordinances and laws in order to guide mankind and secure their needs. Thus, religion has a more extensive share, and the intellect a more confined position. In this viewpoint, the intellect itself is sometimes counted as one of the basic principles in deducing the rules, and is thus placed in the service of religion.

The Second viewpoint assigns the revelation and religion positions only for cases where human intellect fails to help. And these are two cases: one, the realm of spiritual and devotional acts and duties - "must" and "must not"- pertaining to spiritual and esoteric life given to men in the form of commands and prohibitions through "revelation". It is in such matters that man's intellect, being unable to comprehend, needs guidance from God the Almighty and the prophets.

Case Two pertains to knowledge and dogmas which are not possible for the intellect to acquire, such as the circumstances of the day of Resurrection, measure and calculation of the deeds, paradise and hell. Human beings need the revelation in these matters.

As for the principles of faith which are conceivable by man's intellect: religion has nothing new to gift. The material at hand is no more than rational guidance.

The advocates of this second viewpoint also hold that the same thing concerns man's needs in this world, such as: politics, government, law, economics, health and treatment, natural science, mathematics, astronomy and humanities. It is said: man's faculty of reasoning and experience are to try to acquire these items of learning and accumulate more knowledge. These subjects are outside the duties of revelation and religion. Religion has not come to help us in medicine and treatment, and explain the effects of foods, spices, fruits, and so on. Religious texts references to these areas merely endorse or confirm the customary ordinances and knowledge of the time, or are the outcome of the wisdom and experience of the Prophet (s) himself and the Infallible Imams (‘a), because there is no doubt that they - in addition to what they get through the revelation and revealed sciences- have been prominent people of their own time. That is why their speech is of two kinds: the revealed words, which are constituents of the religion, and the wise sayings which have emanated from their outstanding and logical personality; these were not considered as constituents of the religion.

Although the prophet and the Imams were protected through inerrancy, *ismah*, against all errors and were free from all mistakes, these latter words should not be considered as religion because anything that is considered so demands acceptance and obedience, two necessary conditions. Thus, commands and prohibitions in this section are not *ta'abudi*: they should not be considered similar in scale to rendering service to God, since anything that is considered so is attributed with necessity, *wujub*, love, *isthbab*, and aversion, *kiraha*. But these words and sayings are guidance. Even if these words have been used in the Qur'an and in the form of revelation, they are not considered as parts of religion. For example, although in the Qur'an there is the verse "*So We revealed to him, saying: Make the ark before Our eyes and* according to *Our revelation*"[1], making the ship is not part of the revelation. Also, the Qur'anic verse states: "*Surely your Lord is Allah, Who created the heavens and the earth in six periods of time*"[2], the creation of the heavens and the earth in six days is not a part of religion.

Besides the above, there is a third viewpoint that seems more moderate and closer to reality. It is based more on inter-religion than on outer-religion study and judgment. This viewpoint has refrained from excess and deficiency available in the above-mentioned two thoughts, and has chosen a middle-point, detailed below:

1. *Surat al-Mu'minun: 27.*
2. *Surat A'raf: 54.*

Devotional Rituals

As for the rituals: It is only revelation and religion that are authorized to explain and elucidate matters and subsidiary issues thereof pertaining to sensual and eschatological lives, devotional rituals, obligatory, *wajib*, and recommended, *mustahab* acts that lead to perfection of the soul and proximity to God, causes for the fall and annihilation of the soul, prohibited, *muharramat*, and disapproved, *makruhat*, acts that distance one from God and lead to affliction and wretchedness in the afterlife, because the intellect is unable to grasp these. Religion *is* extensively involved in clarifying these issues and in helping human beings.

Inter-religion studies and examination of the Qur'an and *hadith* literature also confirm this point.

Ethics

As for ethics: In this viewpoint, clarification of noble traits and ethical values, and summoning people to them, explanation of moral vices and counter-values, and making recommendations to keep away from them are also considered as parts of religion and of the prophets' schemes, because taking on good traits and refraining from vices have marked effects in bringing the soul perfection and the afterlife felicity, and these have been among the aims of prophets' great mission. Although man's moral conscience and practical intellect have the capability to distinguish the good and evil traits, they are nevertheless in need of receiving guidance from the Prophet. This is particularly so in the case of the early

people who lived a thoroughly simple life and possessed simple mode of reasoning.

If prophets had not aroused human beings' moral consciousness, and if they had not called men's intellect to ponder and recognize the good and evil traits, mankind would have suffered irreparable damage. Emotions and ethical constraints observed in different societies and nations - even in non-religious communities – are most probably the result of prophets' continuous efforts throughout history. One cannot say that God, the Wise, has abandoned man to his own devices and that religion has had no share in this vitally important issue. Man has always needed the prophets' guidance, encouragement and warning in distinguishing virtues and vices, and so do today's civilized men. In spite of the prophets' continuous struggles, you can manifestly see weakness, deviation and decline of moralities in the so-called civilized societies. How can such societies have no need of guidance from the prophets?

Inter-religion studies of religious books in particular the Qur'an and the Islamic *hadith* books confirm this view. The verses of the Noble Qur'an contain moral traits, most Qur'anic stories follow moral purposes; moral *hadiths* are substantial in number; and the holy Prophet of Islam (s) used to state clearly: "انی بعثت لاتمم مکارم الاخلاق" I was raised to bring the moral excellences to perfection. Now, is it probable that moral traits are not part of religion?

Principles of the Faith

As for the principles of faith: this viewpoint holds to the belief that although reasoning holds an exalted position for

comprehension of intellectual truths, for recognition of the principles of faith and provide relevant proofs, it is not left alone.

At the head of the prophets' plans was the permanent consideration they gave to the principles of faith and to the awakening of the human being's essential disposition, *fitrah.* It was the prophets who directed the human beings' intellect to the existence of God, His attributes, the resurrection and the hereafter, and introduced themselves as the Prophets and the Messengers. If there had been no Prophets, it would have taken human beings, particularly the naïve early men, much longer to learn about the existence of God, the Almighty, the resurrection and the need for the revelation, and would have, as a result, suffered irreparable losses. Although throughout history the prophets did a lot to propagate the worship of God, there are, nevertheless, so many polytheists and pagans among the so-called civilized people. How can one claim that: the principles of faith are dependent, have no need for the revelation and religion, are not part of the religion, and that the Prophets' involvements functioned as mere intellectual and rational guidance, could be flawed, criticized and investigated.

We also agree that the principles of faith are rational, *aqli*, and demonstratively provable, and that they are not to be blindly taken as items of worship, *ta'abudi.* And it is for this particular reason that avenues are completely open to presenting arguments, proofs and criticism, as is evident in philosophy and theology books. However, this does not mean that we have no need for the revelation at all, and

that these principles should not be regarded parts of the religion.

Subsidiary Items of Belief

In this viewpoint, subsidiary items of belief should also be explained through the revelation and guidance of the prophet, such as: life after the death and during the intermediate stage, *barzakh*, between the life of this world and the eternal life, the state and conditions on the Day of Judgment, revival of the man, the recording of human beings' actions in this world, the reckoning and measuring of the deeds in the next world, the check-points and difficulties of the Resurrection, paradise and the blessings therein, the Fire and the punishments therein. Because the intellect is not capable of knowing these matters, we have to benefit from the revelation and the prophets' guidance.

Law and the Social, Economic, and Political Statutes

In this viewpoint, divine religions, in particular Islam, have got involved in drawing up laws and regulations concerning juridical, penal, financial, economic, family matters and social relations, and have not abandoned the human beings to their own devices because without laws, man's life will not prosper. God, the Wise, who had placed at the disposal of human beings all blessings they need to secure felicity and welfare, has not withheld the guidance they need in attaining trouble-free prosperity.

Could the Lord of the World, who is well-aware of the selfish tendencies and employing inclinations in man, possibly leave them to their own devices and choosing to draw up laws that prevent trouble? The early men, and

those contemporary with Prophets were not fully aware and experienced with regard to the real welfare of society. These people needed more guidance, given to them by the prophets.

A study of the Islamic texts and sources – such as the Qur'an and the *ahadith* books - confirm this point too. These books abound with valid laws and rulings related with legal, social, economic and even political issues. So, there is no reason why these should not be taken as parts of religion. Nevertheless, the religious texts do not contain a full discussion of all the laws and regulations related with all dimensions of life in detail. Thus, the rules and regulations are divided into two groups, one*:* legal issues and topics, *abwab*, of transaction, two*:* economic, political and governmental matters; the former mentioning general or sometimes particular cases which are, however, not all-inclusive. In these texts, there are also cases for which no verdict has been issued. These make up the so-called free, *faraq*, zone, for which either the well-qualified jurist of Islamic Law, *hakim Shar'* or the people might take a decision based on the stipulations of revealed Law.

The laws and regulations that fall within the second group have been explained the least. In most cases people have been entrusted with the responsibility of using their mind and experience, in drawing up and implementing the best and most appropriate laws in conformity with various circumstances of the developing life, sciences and industries and ordinances of the Law, *shari'at.*

What has been recorded in religious texts in relation with these matters, and is considered religiously valid, is part of the religion, and there is no reason why it shouldn't.

Natural Sciences

In religious texts there are plenty of materials on natural sciences dealing with such questions as: efficacy of foods, fruits, herbs, vegetables, medicine and health, zoology, geology, and astronomy. Even if definite revelation, or authentic traditions, or presumptive guesses have made affirmations, these are very unlikely to be constituents of religion because they are ineffective in securing one's happiness in the hereafter, unless religion is so re-defined as to include these things too.

Humanities

Religious texts contain discussions on branches of humanities such as: psychology, education, sociology, history, and anthropology. Because these can have a share in securing one's happiness in the hereafter, they can be taken as parts of religion. Therefore, one may invoke these branches of study if they have been affirmed by the definite revelation, or authentic *ahadith* from the Infallibles - the Prophet (s) or the Imams (‘a) - and if there is no doubt regarding their indications. In case of an indubitable counter-proof, either rational or transmitted, these items of learning can be outwardly interpreted and justified. If there is no certainty with regard to what they indicate or with regard to the source of the *hadith*, they are no more valid than a presumption, and cannot be attributed to religion.

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